THE MASKED PROPHET

"Each individual was encircled in a halo of shimmering light."—*See page* 18.

THE

MASKED PROPHET

One's Hidden Self

A Romance in Two Lives—Here and Hereafter

BY

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JUN 21 1895
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NEW YORK

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H.J.H. Jan. 25, 1906

DEDICATION.

TO the broad and liberal minded Reader wherever found this modest little book is respectfully dedicated, with a hope that something it may contain will aid in more firmly establishing the habit of granting unto all men even the smallest rights and privileges claimed for ourselves.

PREFACE.

The first chapters of this story were published in "The Cosmopolitan Magazine" under the title of "A Romance of an Hour," and met with such flattering commendation that I was induced to enlarge, continue, and publish the story in its present form, hoping in a measure to meet the expectations of the early friends, as well as to please any readers into whose hands it may chance to fall.

The author has striven to keep clearly within the scope of scientific research, and of known, if not well-known laws and facts. There is a very serious motive in the publication of this little book beyond the mere money return it may bring, which for the present will be left for discovery, by reading between the lines, if not found in the open page.

JNO. BOWLES.

THE MASKED PROPHET.

CHAPTER I.

One lovely Sabbath morning in June the hero of this romance strolled through a park of native forest which skirts the capital city of a great nation. He was in time for the morning rehearsal of nature's everlasting symphony ; bird and bee humming in wondrous harmony with rustling leaf, bud and blossom. He paused at the base of a pyramid of wild-rose brambles, and,

gazing at the only open blossom on the topmost branch, he said: "Yes, it is always so; the most tempting things are just beyond our reach; but, in spite of your apparent security I must capture you, my royal beauty." And springing up lightly he grasped the thorny stem and the prize was his.

What cared he for the wound on his finger? Had he not secured the rose, this rare and latest masterpiece of nature's craft?

He sat down at the base of a majestic oak and mused, intently gazing the while at the flower and then at the crimson drop which was its price.

He was what the world calls a dreamer. His Greek profile, light-brown beard and mustache, deep-blue eyes and high forehead told of the mingled temperaments of poet, philosopher and artist, each striving for the mastery. One might suspect a lack of the sterner practical qualities, perhaps; yet the nature of this man was, after all, too practical to soar far away from the physical facts of his environment.

But this morning he must soar. He was un-

der a strange spell of enchantment. Last night there appeared to him in his dreams a vision which had frequently come of late, and which left always for days a strange path of light upon this commonplace life. It was the vision of a beautiful girl. With strange vividness he saw her last night. The touch of her hand seemed to lift him above earthly experiences. The smouldering embers of divine aspiration kindled under the light of her glance. If he could always feel thus! What would matter the defeats and disappointments of life! So it was that this morning he felt an impatient longing to pierce beyond this material veil to the eternal verities which are just behind it.

As he drank the perfume of the rose he asked himself:

"What is it? What is this fragrance? With enlarged vision could we see it? Do particles of sublimated matter assume shapes fantastic? or, as is more likely, do they appear in the form of the parent, as semi-spiritual roses?

"And thou, too, O ruby drop, tell me of yourself and the shapes divine which make up

your royal coloring. Is it possible that you, too, are composed of atoms fashioned after the Divine Prototype? Do you bear the image of man in some semi-spiritual resemblance?"

As he mused thus he became gradually conscious, without surprise, that he was in the presence of a vast multitude of people, beings like himself, but who were swaying to and fro in the wild tumult of despair which follows a great calamity. So might Lisbon have looked the moment after the earth yawned, or Atlantis when in the throes of cataclysmic disaster. There were wild prayers, entreaties, to him to save them. Why were they addressed to him?

Gradually the truth was borne in upon his consciousness that these beings were a part of himself. His organism was their universe, and beyond its limits they had no power to conceive of existence. The prick of the thorn was to them a cataclysm—a wild upheaval which threw them open to an environment to which they were not adapted and in which they must inevitably perish. He heard them petitioning him with self-accusing prayers to save them from his

just wrath, which no doubt their sins had provoked. How could he reach them; how make them understand that this misfortune was not retributive, but had its origin in complications far beyond their little universe?

Suddenly there appeared two beings, evidently of a different type, bright, radiant, ineffable—a man with the face of a sage leading by the hand a fair creature, seemingly his daughter. It needed but one glance to see that she was the same, the lovely visitant of his dreams.

With an air of calm authority the man spoke, and his words brought instant peace to the distracted and disordered multitude.

"My children," he said, "be not dismayed, be patient and wait. You are in the hands of law and of love; not at the mercy of caprice and of anger. I know whereof I speak, and I tell you we may trust the everlasting and eternal Power to heal every wound. You are in divine keeping and all is well. Each of you has a duty to perform in the work of repair—let each see that he does it faithfully and well. The reward will be swift and sure." Then turning, he said:

"You are no doubt surprised at what you have seen. You have had a glimpse of a hitherto unsuspected world. Come with me and I will reveal more of its marvelous economy."

In another moment they found themselves in a region of strange charm and beauty. No radiant sun seemed to shine from the zenith of its heaven, but a soft diffused light illumined the atmosphere.

"This," said the sage, "is as it were the Dome of the Temple. It is the highest part of the organism, the seat of the directive energies which control the rest. In other words, you are at this moment exploring the recesses of your own brain. Among the myriads of beings composing your organism, only the bravest and strongest reach this supreme elevation and participate in these exalted functions, and there again they are sifted and classified according to their fitness for the higher or lower activities indicated in your system of knowledge by the 'white' and the 'gray.' I shall use another of your terms to make you comprehend the process by which these changes are accomplished. It is by 'selec-

tion.' Selection determines everything. Every atom or being becomes a part of some one of the various organs or activities of your organism by means of a preference, inclination or affinity, which ranges it with an absolute fidelity to its essential nature. There are no arbitrary rulings in creation, be it great or small, and the world you are now observing is subject to the identical law which controls the suns in their courses."

He who was a guest in this strange world looked about him with an eager curiosity, listening the while to his venerable guide.

The atmosphere of the place produced a singular exaltation of spirit. He could remember only on one or two occasions having for one brief moment attained the sort of joy he now experienced. The dross of life seemed to have dropped away. He could not imagine the existence of anything ignoble.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, drawing in a deep inspiration of the strange ether, "this is worth living."

The old man smiled and said: "My son, you

are in your native air. I knew that you were suited to it and that is the reason I conducted you hither. Some could not breathe in this region of quickened forces, but all that involves much you cannot understand now. My daughter has long watched you," he added, smiling again. "Come here, Aleita." The beautiful girl was at his side in a moment. He looked at her fixedly for only an instant and then went on: "You were right, my dear girl. Your friend is well fitted to understand these mysteries, and you shall guide his feet while I lead his thought to a new understanding of the secrets of his own being. I am Alta," he said, turning to his companion, "and you may call me by that name, if you will."

"That will indeed be a privilege," was the reverent reply. "Sire, a moment ago you called me, 'son.' It had a thrilling sweetness to me. Will you call me so again and ever after?"

Alta smiled. "Yes, I understand, you love her. That is but natural, because she is the other half of your own soul, and she loves you under the same law of necessity."

"Loves me!" gasped the youth. "Aleita, tell me, is this so? Can it be that there is such happiness for me?"

"Yes," she said, with simple frankness, "I love you;" and, as if proud of the self-surrender, she yielded to the embrace of his enfolding arms, lifting a face which shone with a new and strange brightness as she rested contentedly there.

A wondrous calm pervaded the soul of Reginald as, with Aleita's hand in his, they wandered through the shining recesses, the crystalline labyrinths of this strange place.

"You might be here a thousand years," said Alta, "and yet not exhaust the marvels of this place. There are myriads of departments, each conducted with such absolute precision, a microscope of a million diameters would not detect a flaw in the work. The nature of these activities I cannot explain to you, but their import is tremendous. You see those messengers speeding with the fleetness of light from one point to another? They bear messages to and from every remote part of your being, and bring re-

ports of all coming within the cognizance of your sense and perception.

"Do you observe a change in the conditions? There is some exciting cause, which gives increased brilliancy to the light and a peculiar rarity to the ether. This is sometimes produced by the approach of another organism to which this one is allied; but in this case the cause is different, as I will explain to you later. Lean on me, my son," he said, looking at his companion intently.

"I do feel a little faint," said Reginald, accepting the proferred support. He watched Aleita, who, in a sort of impatient rapture, floated on beyond them, and seemed melting into the strange fantastic beauty of the scene. The light dazzled with its growing intensity, augmented now by electric coruscations. The changing variety of beautiful form and color fatigued while it charmed. The ether pulsated in a wild rush of waves which were color to the eye, music to the ear and fragrance to the sense. Reginald felt as if he were suffocating from excess of perception, and grasping his forehead

with both hands, uttered a cry and fell at Alta's feet in a swoon.

In another moment he opened his eyes upon the familiar forest. There were the pines and oaks, and among the brown needles and leaves at his feet lay the rose he had plucked. Alta was holding his hand, and ah! wonder of wonders! Aleita was murmuring sweet words of tenderness as she bathed his head with water from the brook. "Have I dreamed?" he said, "such a strange place!"

"No," said Alta gravely, "you have not dreamed. What you saw is reality. You have looked in upon yourself, and have some idea now of the complexity of your own being. You have learned that the fate of countless multitudes hangs upon your every thought and act; that your volition determines their destiny, while you in turn are made wretched if any one of them fails to perform his part in the economy of your organism. The interdependence is as intimate as it is possible to be; for, in fact, you are they, and they are you. You have looked into the recesses of your own brain and have seen, if

you have not understood, the marvelous workings of its processes. Do you not realize now how grave a responsibility it is to live?

"But your head aches and we must find an antidote for all this introspection. Do you know why the condition grew so intense and so agitating during the last moments of our stay in that place?"

"No," said Reginald, "I do not know, but it seemed as if I should go mad from excess of perception."

"Yes," said Alta, smiling, "that was the exciting cause. It was your mental organ we were traversing, and as your own excitement increased, the conditions there corresponded."

CHAPTER II.

"How marvelous!" exclaimed Reginald.

"Could you see, as I have often seen," Alta went on, "the brain of a genius at the moment when a discovery dawns upon him—it is like the crater of a volcano. But you are fatigued, you must have no more excitement now. Our researches shall be outside of yourself. You shall see your fellow-men, not as you have always known them, but as they appear to me and as they are. Do you see, my son, that luminous spot yonder? It is caused by the conjunction of many men, as you would say, drawn together by a common interest and mutual attraction. They have assembled to worship. That steady diffused light indicates the sympathy or the rapport which fuses the souls of the multitude. This is well suited to my purpose as an illustration, so thither we will go."

He gave a sweeping movement of his uplifted hand, and away they were speeding through space toward the softly illumined spot Alta had indicated. In another moment they were looking down upon an assembly of worshippers. Each individual was encircled in a halo of shimmering light, appearing, indeed, like a "sphere," as called by Alta. A net-work of lines could be discerned, like fine silver threads, in which all seemed enmeshed. Alta anticipated Reginald's question and said, "Those are lines of force, attractive and repellent, which draw these men toward or away from each other. They are the invisible currents which establish the natural relations and association among people."

Reginald looked for some moments in silence and then said: "I observe there is an infinite variety in the appearance of these spheres."

"Yes," said Alta, "and to me that is as full of meaning as is a printed page to you. Your scientists have discovered a system of lines in the spectrum of remote heavenly bodies, which tells their nature and elements. I see before

me lines which in the same way disclose the innermost impulses of each soul, love, truth, hypocrisy, hatred, jealousy, are all revealed in that encompassing halo. You observe those lines of force," he went on, "which stream from the head, are in some individuals much longer and brighter than in others? Those are the men who will inevitably dominate the others. Then, too, there are different qualities of this force, good and evil, that you cannot discern as I do, but you see clearly as I, that a man's personality is not limited within the boundary of his visible physical organism. See how each one extends—some reaching out an influence which penetrates every being in the assembly, while others again have only a little feeble radius of light, which scarcely reaches his nearest neighbor; but you will observe all are interlaced and entwined by these invisible currents, which make the whole world and, indeed, creation, akin; so that just as in the minute beings you saw a while ago in your own organism there is an interdependence, and harm to one must be an injury to all the rest, as all partake

of these same living currents, which flow like your life-blood through the arteries and veins of the race of men."

"Oh, what a complex world!" exclaimed Reginald.

"Complex, indeed," answered Alta; "why, my son, what you have seen is only the beginning of an endless chain. The myriads of beings on the earth, like those before us, constitute a whole, which is again only an integral part of some mightier whole, and that again only a part of another and more gigantic combination. And so on and on, till the brain grows giddy with addition and multiplication, and still we have not yet reached the end, the all, the sum total which is the universe."

"Then if it has no limit it can have no centre," said Reginald, "and if there be an impossible maximum there must also be an impossible minimum. I am lost, lost, in this immensity."

"You are quite right, my son," said Alta; "there is no boundary line, no frontier, and every man makes for himself a centre. The place where he stands is for him the centre of

the universe. I am pleased to find your mind so receptive to these things," he added. "You are equally right in seeing the infinity of the chain leading toward the minute. An impossible minimum follows an impossible maximum. What you call matter, being simply an aggregation of particles, which are in turn composed of other and smaller particles, so that you may subtract and divide till the brain grows weary with the task—as it did just now in multiplying—and still you will have molecules susceptible of division, until we arrive at a point where the atoms are so infinitesimal that all the solids known to science are as honeycomb to the many times divided molecules."

"Then," said Reginald, "why may not this ethereal matter, infinite in attributes, why may it not be spirit?"

Alta shook his head gravely. "The time is not ripe for you to know the relation of spirit and matter. You have much to learn before you are ready for that great mystery, but this much I may tell you; Spirit is to matter what the general is to the army, everywhere present

by his cohesive and directive force, without which, matter, like the rank and file of the army without the general, would become a disorganized and ineffectual mass. And as the power of the chief in command is shared by the next in authority, and so on down to the ranks, so the universe requires every officer and man to do his whole duty at his post. Now listen! The leader of this assembly is about to pray."

Words of supplication and entreaty followed those of invocation and praise. They seemed wrung from a bruised heart and agonized soul, and dwelt upon the just wrath of an offended God, one who must have the shedding of blood to appease him before there can be forgiveness and peace.

Alta's brow contracted, and, sighing deeply, he said: "Poor children, poor children, why can they not understand?"

"Now observe," said Aleita to Reginald, "my Father has come into touch with this man's nature; note the change in his speech."

Almost while she spoke the bowed head was raised and words eloquent with hope and trust

electrified his listeners. "Thou art not a God of vengeance, but of love. We are not victims of Thy wrath, but children of Thy divine heart. We may grope and stumble, for the way is dark, but Thou wilt not permit one of Thy children to perish in darkness and despair."

The sensation in the assembly was profound. Some few lingered to admonish their pastor that he was making salvation too cheap, too easy. But the preacher heard or heeded not.

There was a life-giving touch upon his bowed head, from which there streamed a wave of hope and aspiration which seemed to flood his soul. The touch was Alta's, whose invisible hands rested upon the head of the good man.

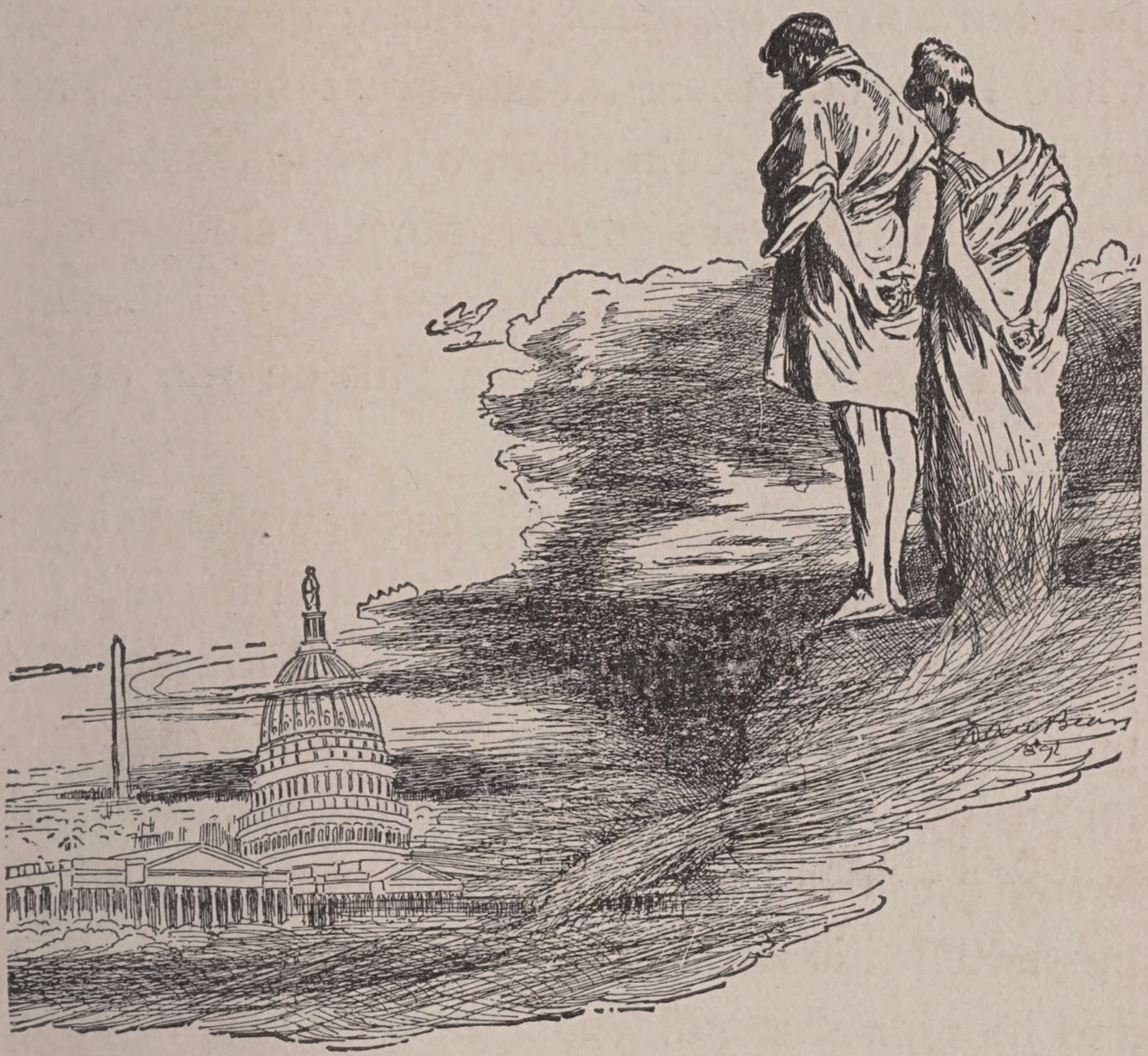
"Now, my children, I must leave you for a while," said Alta. Turning to Reginald, he added: "Aleita will be your guide, and if you desire it, will convey you to scenes far beyond the region of earthly pilgrimages. She has a brave spirit and a strong grasp upon the forces which belong to our plane of existence. She loves you much, my son, and you have before you an eternity of joy beyond the power of the

human mind to conceive," and with a farewell wave of the hand he vanished.

Reginald trembled. He was for the first moment alone with this divinely and yet humanly lovely creature. Words seemed a coarse profanation of the measureless, ineffable feeling which filled his soul! He opened his arms and she glided into his embrace. Whether it was hours or moments he knew not. What had he to do with time now? She loved him. His restless soul had found peace, he had become a part of eternity. Rising and setting suns meant nothing to him forevermore!

Did she speak? He knew not, and yet he knew her thought. She was telling him how long she had loved him, how she had tried—vainly tried—to make him understand that she belonged to him. And then, had she not suffered? Had she not seen him clothe an earthly object in her own attributes, and try to enshrine a creature of clay in the home she had beautified for herself? When he had found his earthly love fading in disappointment and bitterness; and she—she had been almost glad when

he wept. "Still I comforted you," she seemed to say. "Your outstretched arms often enfolded me, yet you only dimly knew it, and thought you dreamed. Ah! dearest, the other



THERE LAY A FAIR CITY.

was the dream, and this the real. If you doubt the reality of this moment," she said, laughing, "look down there and see what is before us."

Reginald looked as she bid him. There lay

a fair city. Did he not know it well! Its ample white avenues were fringed with waving verdure which only half concealed beautiful homes, and many a graceful spire, like the jewelled finger of faith, pointing heavenward; while here and there arose great marble and granite piles of architecture, with mighty domes, and out of the very earth sprang a cloud-piercing, spotless shaft, whose glistening top looked beyond the river, to the blue hills on the other side.

They hovered for a moment over this beautiful scene and then drifted on until they looked down upon a nation's dormitory, where her patriot slain peacefully slumber, while on cushioned wheels and with velvet tread, devoted living pay tribute to heroes dead! Often had he visited this hallowed spot; but never before had he seen the golden light which enveloped it, nor the radiant beings keeping watch o'er these green mounds!

On and on they floated, over broad fields and fertile valleys; the lowing of the cattle and joyous peals of laughter mingling with the hum of

the busy, simple life below, in the familiar cadence of earthly sounds, which struck strangely now on Reginald's ear.

"Why do we come here?" he had thought rather than said, to which his guide replied: "Reminiscence and habit open up pathways through which the soul naturally moves; besides, you love these scenes, and the desire to see them, although only vague and not formulated into a wish, creates an impulse towards them. Oh! you have so much to learn. To desire is to be, and to wish for is to have."

How well he knew the scene which was now spread out beneath their gaze! Every towering peak of this mountain range so blue was a familiar friend. That rugged pinnacle with the human profile in stone was keeping watch just as of yore over that lovely village nestling at its feet. And there was the same great encircling valley, fertile, rich, beautiful; and beyond was the cavern Luray, that strange treasure-house, filled by nature as if in affluent sport of creative fancy.

A desire to descend into its unexplored depths

flitted across his mind. He was only conscious of meeting a tender reproach from Aleita's eyes, as he found himself descending a dark, slippery incline, with alternate illumination and inky shadows so intense as seemingly to cut the very optic nerve. He felt the clasp of Aleita's hand, firm, yet soft as eiderdown, and on he went, down, down, through labyrinths of winding caverns, the air growing heavy with sepulchral odors and a horror of chill dampness clinging to stalactite and stalagmite, augmenting the dangers of the slippery path.

Soon he felt rather than saw the presence of innumerable creatures, and there arose a horrid din of subterranean sounds clashing out of harmony, each grating discord seeming to say: "Go back! go back! We like you not: what do you here?"

Reginald could bear no more. "Aleita!" he cried, "let us get away from this horrible place."

Instantly he felt the sweet breath of the open air and the sunshine. Aleita's lips were pressed upon his own, and she laughed merrily as she

said: "So you do not like the underworld? Ah, well! you must learn to be careful about what you wish Remember what I told you. It was horrible," she said, shuddering, "but I dare not leave you to yourself. Come, dearest, let us away to yonder shining peak, and forget all about this cavern and its ghostly occupants."

CHAPTER III.

How beautiful, how tempting was the landscape from that greater elevation, bathed in the sunlit splendor of late afternoon! "It is beautiful," she said, pressing her companion's hand in sympathy, "and I do not wonder you desire to be there. Let us go," she said impulsively, and instantly their feet were on firm, prosaic earth, the clouds flitting and the trees waving over their heads. They were a part of the landscape they had beheld but a moment ago.

Reginald had never realized so fully as at this moment the joy of possessing this divinely lovely girl. Now, with his feet pressing the green turf, he knew it was reality, not a deluding vision of bliss. She loved him and was to be his own through all eternity. He extended his arms toward her, but she shrank

from his embrace with a little shiver, and stood apart, pale, silent, her eyes fixed on the ground, where her feet seemed too firmly fixed.

"Dearest, what is it?" said he, in alarm.

She tried to smile, as she answered: "I think we had better go down to yonder plateau where we see those tents, but I am afraid you will have to lead here," she faltered; "I do not feel able to guide you in this place."

"Lean on me, dear one," answered he, proudly. How glad he was to have her look to him for protection! But the way was difficult, and he scarcely knew how to surmount the intricate dangers of the descent. Network of vines entangled them, sharp stones cut their feet, and sometimes further progress seemed impossible. Reginald felt as if struggling in a strange nightmare. A benumbing sense of insufficient strength and skill for what he had undertaken dismayed him.

Aleita sighed deeply. "We will rest, darling," he said; "you are not used to these rough ways."

A tree had fallen across the path and he drew her down upon the moss-covered seat.

Her eyes looked into his with an expression of pathetic weariness and hopelessness. He tried to tell her of his love, of the eternity of happiness that awaited them. A dread chill smote his heart as she withdrew her hand from his and examined it closely, almost as if she expected to find a stain upon it, saying absently: "Eternity! How do we know there is an eternity? Forgive me if I pain you," she said, "but since we came here all seems so dark, the other with its joy seems only a dream. I behold things now in the light of reason. The warmth and color have faded out of everything in its cold rays."

The sun was sinking below the horizon. Its glow of crimson and purple faded into pink and gray and these in turn deepened into the sombre tints which precede the night. Still they sat speechless, two dumb souls in the shadow of a dense forest, far from human habitation. Reginald aroused himself from the lethargy which overwhelmed him and tried to talk again of their love, but his stammering tongue gave only feeble expression and Aleita answered absently: "I think—I do not quite understand you." He

realized that every effort engulfed them more and more in the quicksand of hopelessness.

In agonized fear of something, he knew not what, he sprang to his feet. "Let us go," he said; "let us get away from this place to the plain below. Lean on me, dearest, I will take you safely." But in the growing darkness they stumbled and fell, rising again to clamber over boulders and fallen trees with despairing effort, and finally reached a wall of shelving rock which forbade another step. Aleita sank upon the ground with a cry of anguish, and then, lifting her face, said: "Oh, Father, Alta, come or we perish!" In another moment, calm, radiant, majestic, Alta stood before them. "My poor children," he said, "why would you come back to these physical conditions? Why did you sink to the level of the common-place?" Then as his hands took one of each of theirs, the solid earth seemed to grow luminous, even transparent. Once more they realized that to think and to desire was to have and to be. Ah! the joy of this mastery of the spirit over the natural physical forces.

They sped away, away. Earth had faded into a little scintillating ball in space; its attendant moon, which had for a time expanded into a great luminous mass, was now a minute point of light. They were threading their way in those vast unvisited regions among the stars. A new sun blazed upon their path, growing, expanding. What had seemed mere points of light about it were clustering groups of satellites, glittering like splendid jewels about the great central fiery mass, which at last seemed a mountain of flame; while each satellite was at least as large as our own sun, each carrying its encircling moons, and each of these larger than our own moon at the full and blazing in a variety and intensity of color beyond the capacity of the human eye to conceive. Our own solar system diminished into a mere rushlight in the heavens beside the splendor of this family of stars. Is it strange that Reginald prostrated himself before the God of such a universe, and said: "What is man that Thou art mindful of him? What a mighty creation is this!" he exclaimed.

"Yes," said Alta, calmly, "yet one conscious

soul is greater than all these. This is only the theatre, the stage, for the real life, where we are the actors. You know so little, it is difficult to make you understand, but the glory does not lie so much in immensities, but rather in the subtle perfection of the essence."

"And are these worlds the theatres of an existence like ours on earth?" said the youth, reverently.

"Like? Yes and no," said Alta. "Like in kind, but in degree as like as you are like the oyster. There is an intensity of experience here you could not comprehend, and yet its elements are all contained within you, and all exist in your world, which is now invisibly circling about that faint star yonder," saying which, he pointed to a feebly flickering point of light across the trackless space beyond.

"Is that our earth?" inquired Reginald.

"Your earth?" and Alta smiled as at the guesses of a child; "that is the entire solar system. The sun and its remotest satellites are from this distance merged into one point of light, to which your earth contributes a ray too

feeble to be seen. And now I must leave you. Aleita will re-conduct you over the path we have come in due time."

"Not yet," said the enraptured youth, grasping Alta's hand. "Tell me, first, how I may obtain this mastery over the forces of nature. What is the secret which unlocks these glories? Impart this to me, I implore, before you go."

"It is not a thing which can be bestowed or imparted," replied the sage. "It is simply a matter of growth, a natural unfolding of germinant powers by means of minute processes of growth, not by fiat. Impatient souls like yours would leap at once into the higher life, but does one leap from the cradle to the senate chamber? Can one read without learning the alphabet? There can be no unnatural termination of the period of tuition on the lower plane. Can you feed on unripe fruit? The fragrance of the rose is the outcome of the blossom, the bud and the germ. You must patiently tend through sunshine and shadow, in summer sun and winter blast, for the ripening of this fruit; and not daring, so much as patience, is needed."

"Well, at least tell me before you go something of the mysterious relation of spirit to matter. I have so longed to know. Can they exist the one without the other, or are they inseparable, or even identical?"

"Yes, that is the old question," replied Alta. "I, too, struggled hopelessly with it in my own earth life; but how vain, how futile it was. The race of man has not arrived at a point of development where a solution of this mystery is essential or even possible. When it has, it will know. All the currents of the universe would continue to flow as now, if this secret were wrested from the hidden archives. The vast avenues of advancement open broadly, inviting men of thought and earnest purpose to pursue the orderly path of progress which leads to an expanding perception of God's universe. Move patiently along the path, your face set steadily toward the higher, but always realizing that it can only be reached through the lower—that the concrete is the school which fits for the essential life, or life in the essence." With these words Alta waved a majestic farewell and vanished utterly from view.

Reginald was alone with Aleita in this vast ocean of space; no North, no South, no night, no day, no clock to tell the hours nor mark the seconds. Before him the glittering splendors of this strange and nameless sun with its satellites, and in his arms the being who was to him more than all the universe besides. The rapture of a divine soul-satisfying love filled his being. Is it strange that he saw not the clustering star worlds, expanding and diminishing as they sped by them along over the pathless regions of space? It seemed but a moment of time when Aleita, with a little sigh of regret, said, "Do you recognize this spot?"

Looking down he beheld the waving tops of the pines, and near that pyramid of wild roses he saw the sleeping form of a man, his face hidden by the clustering blossoms.

A vague terror smote him. "You are not going to leave me?" he gasped.

"Yes, dearest," she answered, "for a time, at least. It must be so, but I shall come again. This shall be our trysting-place," she said, smiling, "and when I come to you hereafter will

you know it is I, or will you think you dream? Oh, Reginald, I could not bear that now. But I will give you a key which will always unlock the door dividing us;" and with both arms about his neck she whispered into his ear the magic word which would always bring her to his side, adding tenderly: "It will not be needed long, dearest, and then an eternity together! And if you need me, remember—all obstacles will melt before that word which you have but to utter and we will be face to face and heart to heart."

Overwhelmed and agitated as he was, Reginald could still not resist a strange fascination which drew him toward the partly concealed figure of the sleeping man under the great oak.

Aleita smiled sadly as she saw this. "If you awaken him I shall have to go," she said, with a warning gesture. At this momeut she lifted her head and stood for a moment as if listening. Then turning to him she said: "The time has come. It has been beautiful as a dream, but it is over. I must go. Remember—it is not a dream. Farewell."

"My love, how can I let you go?" His lips met hers, his very soul seemed departing in an ecstasy of love.

He felt as if he were sinking down, down, into fathomless depths; then, with a strange feeling of having lost a priceless jewel he opened his eyes and looked at his empty arms.

From a distance came the hum of the busy city, the wild-rose brambles rustled gently in the breeze, there was the drop of blood on his finger, dried into a tiny spot of dark red, and at his feet lay the fading rose.

And the romance so beautiful was here suspended for a time at least.

CHAPTER IV.

FRESH from an experience so ecstatic, conscious of powers within him so far transcending anything that he had hoped or dreamed, it is not strange that Reginald Irving returned to his home in a state of singular exaltation.

He had foretasted some of the joys of the great beyond. What had been all dark and formless had become to him like a familiar traveled land. For one short hour the invisible had been the visible, the limitations of sight, sound, motion, time, had been removed. And what had he discovered? Not a new form of existence, but the old existence expanded, and with a larger environment; he had felt a stronger grasp upon its elements, a more complete understanding of his own place in the great cosmic plan. The germ of the Beyond lies in the Now and the Here.

When night came and the curtain of darkness fell over the fair city where he dwelt, he went out, his head bared to the cooling breeze, and walked as in a trance all through the night, unable to throw off the intoxicating spell of that journey through space with Aleita. With sorrow he saw the dawn of a new day, and watched the light, which must compel him back to the ordinary haunts and cares of men, creeping over the landscape.

He, late a denizen of the celestial spaces; he, who had beheld the glowing splendors of those far-off worlds, dwarfed now to mere glimmering points of light—he must talk to men of buying and selling, must enter into the meagre and material details of life. Could it ever again be possible? He, who had looked in upon the mysterious processes of his own brain, its minute perfections, its delicate complexities—could he use that organ again for sordid and ignoble purposes?

No; he would live in the spiritual, not the material world. By lofty contemplation, remote from men, he would fit himself for the

companionship of the being who honored him with her love.

"To-morrow, yes, to-morrow, I shall see her again, and I will tell her of my resolve to devote myself to this preparation for eternal joys with her."

The city was beginning to stir; the activities of a new day were commencing. He took refuge in his own home, not for rest, but to avoid observation. Unconscious of fatigue, he threw himself upon the bed, and in a few moments was sleeping profoundly.

* * * * *

Mr. Richard Stoddard and his charming young wife had just returned from their wedding journey. As they rose from the dinner table, Mr. Stoddard said:

"I think I'll run around and see Reginald for a few moments, Amy; and, perhaps, I'll bring him home with me."

Returning shortly after, he seemed disturbed as he joined his wife in the drawing-room.

"Such a strange thing, Amy!" he said. "Reginald has been asleep all day. His house-

keeper says he came in about seven o'clock this morning. She asked him if he wanted his coffee, and he said, No; he was going to sleep, and did not want to be disturbed. That is twelve hours ago, and I couldn't awaken him. He's all right, apparently; breathing quietly, his flesh cool and natural; but I couldn't rouse him, and—it made me feel uncomfortable. What would you do? I shouldn't like to make a sensation unnecessarily."

"Wait," was the brief and sensible reply. "He may be very tired. Nature knows best. Leave him alone. In the morning, if he is still asleep and cannot be roused, why, I would send for a doctor."

And so it was that early the next morning Stoddard was once more standing at his friend's bedside, and at the first touch of his hand, at the sound of his voice, Reginald's eyes opened.

"Well, Rex, you have had a regular Rip Van Winkle sleep—twenty-four hours, by Jove!"

"Is that possible?" said his friend, in bewilderment. He was trying to separate the real from the unreal, in his corporeal consciousness.

Was he dreaming now that Stoddard stood at the foot of his bed, or was it a dream that he had tasted the joys of infinity a few hours before?

"Well, come around and dine with us," said Stoddard, good-humoredly. "By six o'clock perhaps, you'll get your wits together; they seem pretty well scattered just now."

"Thank you, Stoddard, but I cannot dine with you to-night. I have"—with what a delicious thrill he said the words—"I have an appointment this afternoon which may detain me."

"Very well; then why not come around to breakfast?" looking at his watch. "Come in an hour. Amy has breakfast promptly at eight."

The invitation was accepted, and just an hour later Reginald appeared. He was pale, and on his face was an expression none had ever seen there before. Not only was it strangely illuminated, but there was a far-away look about the eyes and a pre-occupation of manner which puzzled and startled his friends.

Stoddard's joyous sallies met no response; and after a while he asked:

"Are you feeling quite well, old fellow?"

"Perfectly well, Dick, only a little confused from the effects of my long sleep."

"I thought perhaps you had been working too hard over that Robinson matter. By the way, what is going to be done about that estate? Will the heirs compromise?"

Reginald paused for a moment, and a look of perplexity came to his face. Then, stretching out his hand to his friend, he said:

"Stoddard, there is no use. I really am unfitted just now to talk except upon one theme. You are my best friends. I think I shall have to trust you. If you will allow me, I will close the doors."

Returning to his seat, he looked at the two anxious, expectant faces before him.

"I hope," thought Stoddard, with a throb of sympathy, "he hasn't been getting into trouble. He couldn't go wrong. But what can it be?"

Reginald's voice trembled a little as he began:

"I have had, within the last forty-eight hours, a most extraordinary and startling experience." And briefly and vividly he pictured to them

what had been revealed to him in that drop of blood; then the exploration of his own brain; the forces, hitherto invisible, he had been enabled to see in that assembly of worshipers. He told them of Aleita, of the marvelous journey through space, with stars and satellites moving before him and the heavens unrolling as a scroll; of his return, and the parting promise given him by Aleita, after which he had found himself alone under the tree.

Both friends sat motionless, gazing fixedly upon him until he had finished. Amy, with lips parted, eyes dilated, listened eager and breathless to the end. Then, turning to her husband, she said:

"Richard, what do you think of it? Have I not told you such things are realities? Is not my belief vindicated?"

"What do I think of it?" he answered, rising. "I think, Rex old fellow, what you need is change of air and scene just as quickly as you can get it. Pack up your things and take a trip on a bicycle, or go camping in the North-woods with a jolly lot of fellows. Stir up your blood,

and let a stiff northward breeze blow the cobwebs out of your brain. That's what I think," he said, lighting and vigorously puffing a cigar,

Reginald Irving looked at him with mingled pity and resentment. He had exposed something infinitely sacred to a scoffer. "I might have known better than to confide in him," he thought. But Amy, she understood. He felt the bond of unspoken sympathy.

Alone with him a moment later, Amy pressed his hand, and said, "You must tell me more of this. I would give years of my life for such a glorious experience. You must not mind Richard. He means it for your good, but he does not understand these things yet. You will make allowance, I am sure, for you know his devotion to you."

As the two men walked down the broad avenue together in the bright June sunshine, Stoddard said, gently but seriously, "My dear Rex, I am deeply concerned about you. I don't want to hurt your feelings, but I think you are drifting into dangerous waters: I would rather see you a prey to opium or hasheesh. Think of

it. You are a young man with urgent practical affairs to look after, and with too much depending upon the soundness of your judgment to give yourself up to this sort of thing. I tell you, old fellow, you must call a halt. The best thing you can do is to forget, if possible, that 'golden key' to Aleita's presence. This is a dangerous form of intemperance, and has done more than anything toward filling our madhouses."

Reginald could not help feeling stung by this rebuke and chilled by his friend's lack of sympathy. But what need had he now for human companionship and approval? More than ever he was resolved: he must keep aloof from men. Would he not in a few hours be in the grove? And then he had but to whisper one word, and she would be there, flooding his soul, not with joy alone, but with highest aspiration. In these moments he should live; in the intervals he should exist.

CHAPTER V.

As his foot touched the turf beneath the pines a few hours later, Reginald felt a hand upon his shoulder, and, looking up, beheld the majestic form of Alta.

"You are impatient to see her again," said he, kindly. "That is natural. She, too, rebels at the space which divides you from her, and her soul struggles to reach yours. You and she are absolutely free to choose, in this as in all matters; you are controlled only by the limitations of circumstance. I have not the desire, nor indeed the power, to exert authority over either of you. Hear what I have to say, and then your fate lies in your own hands.

"Your friend's words sounded harsh and discordant this morning; but he is right. Perhaps I committed an indiscretion in opening to you

for a brief time the possibilities dormant within you. I did it to gratify my child, believing you were strong enough to find in it an inspiration, not a temptation.

"You resolved yesterday to separate yourself from human companionship and to fit yourself by high contemplation for your eternal union with Aleita. This was an unwise resolve, and shows how imperfectly you understand existence. Listen to me. *So long as your feet touch the earth, that is your abode and the field for your endeavor.* If you spend your time in communing with a world above and beyond you, you lose your opportunity here, and gain nothing there. It will become a sort of spiritual dissipation, enervating to mind and character. You are not yet ripe for that higher world. Do you know the process that will make you so?"

"No. Tell me, Sire. Your words cut like a two-edged sword, but they are true; I feel, I know, that they are true."

"It is this. Keep in close touch with humanity, intent upon doing good. Lift the fallen, bind up the bruised; in short, do what

the ideal man did—go about doing good. Think you this is not a higher occupation for you in your present development than making rapturous journeys through space? The expansion of faculty which brought you such delirious joy is the natural result of the unselfish life. But the rapture is merely the incident, not the life; if you grasp for it, it will evade you. Wait and work for this pleasure."

Reginald bowed his head in grief and humiliation. He felt in his soul that the rebuke, though severe, was just. He had tried to grasp heavenly joys, before he was fitted for them, or they ripe for him.

"Besides," said Alta, very gently, "such a course would not only be harmful to you, but to my child, my Aleita. The longing desire which draws her to you has already diminished her control of the finer forces, and by indulging it, she might become unfitted for her present sphere. You remember the experience on the mountain, when you permitted her to come to your own level. Have you the wish to repeat it?"

"Not for worlds!" cried Reginald, springing forward with impassioned earnestness. "Not for worlds! Ah, what shall I say? What shall I do? Mark out for me my course. Father of my Aleita, show me the highest path of endeavor and I will pursue it to the end."

"This is what I expected of you," and Alta took the clasped hands within his own. "Do you promise that you will not strive to see her, at least for the present."

"I promise! I swear!"

"That is well. Then there is but little for me to say. Keep the doors of your heart open to humanity. Altruism is the only path which leads to spiritual advancement from where you stand."

"What shall I do to reach men—to help them?"

"When you feel a real pity—not simulated emotion for sake of reward—but a compassion which is pain, a desire to help which is irresistible, then the way will open before you. Do what is put into your mind and heart to do. The suggestion will come, and it will be prompted by infinite wisdom. Act upon it."

Scalding tears of shame and disappointment were in Reginald's eyes. When he raised his bowed head Alta was gone.

The truth was bitter, but oh! how clear it was to him now!—like a child, he had been grasping at unripe fruit. He had believed that to revel in ecstatic dreams, instead of filling his place as a man among men, would be to lead a higher life; and thus, instead of rising to her level, he would have dragged her down to his. Their experiences in those entangling woods were an allegory! Ah, the shame of it! He must see her no more.

A faded, crumpled rose lay at his feet. He stooped and picked it up, reverently kissing the spot where her feet had rested, then placed the rose in his bosom, saying, "This I may keep; it is all that remains of my dream. At least for a time," he added, sorrowfully, as he retraced his steps homeward.

"Altruism, altruism," the words rang as a refrain in his ears. Had he not always been compassionate, always striven to lift the burdens of others, to lighten their woes? But no; the sor-

rows of others had not lain upon his heart with compelling weight. Indeed, he did not know how wretched was the world, how terrible was its weight of suffering. He would find out.

His fortune was more than sufficient for his needs. He should not marry; and he would use his means for the great end pointed out by Alta.

But how? Should he scatter it broadcast? Should he impoverish himself, and toil in self-imposed poverty, clad like a peasant in blouse and girdle of rope? Or should he build some ambitious beneficence for the future, endow it in his will, and leave it to be consumed by lawyers and relatives claiming that he was of unsound mind? He would do none of these things. Rather he would go far from the scene of his temptation, and look upon humanity at its worst and wretchedest, where its need was direst; he would learn the sources of its misery, and then —Alta had promised that inspiration would come.

CHAPTER VI.

SOME months later Richard Stoddard said to his wife, "I have a letter from Rex, Amy. He is in London. But what an odd fellow he is. Instead of being at Morley's, having a good time among friends, where do you suppose he is staying? In East London. He has settled down there, and is making a study of the slums and the dregs of humanity in that slough of degradation. He always would go to the extremes. But that is better than seeing visions and having a love-affair with a being who drags him through space at the rate of a million miles a minute. Of all the wild nonsense that ever mortal conceived, I think that was——"

"Richard, you really distress me when you speak in that way of Reginald's very extraordi-

nary experience. It seems to me something almost sacred, and not to be tread upon in this manner, in derision."

"Amy, you are very lovely, and level-headed about most things, but do you know, I think you were almost as daft as Rex over his visions. I tell you, Amy, he was in a bad way when he came to us that morning, and I think that plain talk I had with him brought him to his senses."

A few months later Reginald received the following letter from his friend:

MY DEAR REX:—

I am sure you will sympathize with our happiness when I tell you that Amy has given me a daughter, as lovely a bit of human clay as ever bore the stamp of divinity. And what do you think we call her? It was a fancy of Amy's, and I have an idea will please a certain friend of ours sojourning in the Whitechapel district. We have named her Aleita. You must know that her birth was celebrated by a peculiar celestial phenomenon, which you will ascribe, I suppose, to the name. There appeared in the heavens that night a remarkable halo of light, and above that an overarching bow, slightly iridescent, and we are told that it rested directly upon our house—or so it seemed to the excited fancy of some people.

Doctor Mazoombah, an Oriental and a physician, was here before our regular physician, Doctor Barton, arrived, and from him I first learned of this phenomenal appearance; and the servants, always ready to greet the supernatural, were in great excitement over it. So I went out to look with my own sober, unimaginative eyes, and I did indeed behold, resting above our house, a most beautiful and distinct luminous halo or corona of light beneath an iridescent arc. Probably, however, it was some optical effect of some perfectly natural phenomenon, though in my impressible state of mind at that particular moment, I was prepared to believe that it was in honor of the event, and should not have been surprised had a choir of angels sung "Glory to God!"

As for Amy, she devoutly believes the appearance to have been supernatural, and is in a hurry to get well and go to the Congressional Library that she may look up mystic literature, and find the symbolic meaning of the Halo and the Arc; she is already convinced that it means something glorious.

When are you coming back to us? Are you going to stay until you have reclaimed all of the British Isles, or shall you limit yourself to England? You are right, my dear fellow. It is a glorious thing to bring light into dark places, and I hope you will succeed.

Ever your sincere friend,

RICHARD STODDARD.

P. S—Amy has learned the meaning of the Halo and the Bow from Doctor Mazoombah, our interesting friend from

the East, who, by the way, knows everything. It may interest you to learn that the Halo represents the endless plane of spiritual existence, and the other, its heavenly origin from earthly roots. I write this by Amy's special desire, not because I am myself impressed with a sense of its importance.

R. S.

"Richard, did you ever see anything so lovely?" said the doting mother.

Richard admitted that he never had, and felt that he could sit and look forever into the mysterious depths of those eyes and at the marvelous perfection of those tiny fingers. It was the old, old miracle, and to him more wonderful far than Amy's supernatural light in the heavens.

"How strange it was about Doctor Mazoombah," Amy continued. "Who do you suppose was the grand old man who knocked at his door and bade him to come?"

"Oh, he dreamed it," said Richard, irreverently. "A little too much hasheesh perhaps, or —or too much——"

"O Richard, how can you? You know he is an ascetic in his habits. It is certainly a fact that some one knocked at his door, and when

he opened it, there stood a stately old man, who told him that his services were required; that he was to go up the avenue as far as the Circle, then turn to his right, and enter the house beneath the halo of light."

Richard laughed, a most distinctly irreverent laugh. "Amy, what a dear little goose you are! Don't you know that every person in the city thinks that halo rested over his house?"

"I am merely repeating to you what Doctor Mazoombah says," his wife answered, but with a little sigh.

"What a picturesque old heathen he is, with his jewels and his salaams." Richard was glad to escape the "halo," about which he and Amy could never agree. "Do you know, the first time I saw him place his hands over his forehead and prostrate himself before you——"

"I don't care about the salaams, but I do think his manners are magnificent in their courtliness," Amy interrupted, with dignity.

"Well, yes; I begin to like them myself. I wonder if I ought to prostrate myself before you in that fashion, Amy?"

Amy laughed. "O Richard, how I wish you could see things as I do, and not be so pessimistic."

"Seriously, Amy, I am beginning to feel an extraordinary interest in this man. His learning is simply amazing, with a ripeness which is wisdom, not mere knowledge—not the grape in the press, but the wine mellowed with age."

After Richard had gone the old nurse shook her turbaned head very solemnly as she said:

"Dat's trew, Miss Amy, what yo' bin sayin' to Mass Richard—suthin' mity strange 'bout dat ole doctor. When he come dat night you wuz in a sorter o' trance like, an' he jus pass his han two or free times ober yo' face, an' yo' open yo' eyes jes as nateral in a minit. An' I dunno wat's gwine to happen to dat baby. She hain't so much as whimpered yit, 'deed, she ain't, Miss Amy. It's all mighty strange bisness to me."

The nurse told the doctor the same wonderful fact, adding, "Tain't no good sign needer. Mity strange tings is happenin' now-days. Dese rings ob light floatin' roun' ober de house, scarin' dese fool niggers to de'f—'deed, dey

can't scare me away from Miss Amy. I gwinter stay right here, I is." And old Aunty planted herself with determination at the head of the crib, with a shake of the bandanna which was more eloquent than her words.

Reginald Irving read with deep and sympathetic interest the letter from his friend, but he started painfully when he heard the name bestowed upon the child. It was so sacred, it seemed as if it should be whispered only in the presence of angels; and now it would be on the irreverent lips of children, even of servants. He was glad he was not there to hear it. This was one of the consequences of his indiscreet confidence.

He found himself painfully agitated by the unexpected sight of that name. In his life, action had taken the place of dreaming; he had striven to banish too vivid memories of that one hour in which he had *lived*. Alta's words had sunk deep within his heart, and with resolute hands he had put aside his great temptation. He was taking soundings in a sea of human wretchedness hitherto unknown to him, and was appalled at its depths.

What right had anyone to happiness or to oblivion while such things were in existence? "Help! Help!" a despairing cry, seemed to come from every house in that city of darkness; and almost every creature he met said to him, if he would listen, "I am perishing. Save me!" What could one man do to stay such a tide of misery? It was an awful problem, but it must be solved. What seemed to him most appalling was not the physical wretchedness of these poor creatures, but the seemingly utter extinguishment of the divine spark within them, or that it had never been lighted. No hunger, no longings, except those of the beasts which perish! Were there any embers of divinity that could be fanned into a flame? Could the desire for better things be awakened? And a voice seemed to say, "First fill the stomachs, cleanse and clothe the bodies. Then the higher and better things will follow naturally as the light follows darkness."

The inspiration had been promised—and it came. Others, men and women, were intent on solving the same problem, and united with him

in developing the plan which unfolded in his mind like a flower, until at last a bright oasis existed in that human desert, and was extending its area farther and farther daily. The angels of light were beginning to drive back the cohorts of darkness. Strict business principles, he had decided, should be applied to the work of charity; and to the work of relieving physical needs and of awakening spiritual and moral desires and longings in these down-trodden human hearts—to which he devoted his life.

CHAPTER VII.

The little girl in the home of the Stoddards grew apace. She was lovely beyond description, mind and character disclosing marvelous depths to the eyes of the adoring parents. Doctor Mazoombah had become a constant visitor at their home, and he and little Aleita were close friends.

Stoddard also found extreme pleasure in the visits of this interesting man, and the two spent long hours discussing themes which the practical man of affairs would once have dismissed as unworthy serious consideration, because they belonged to the region of speculation. But the ripe wisdom of the Oriental had penetrated the crust of Stoddard's unbelief, and he began to think there might be things worthy of consideration, which could not be weighed or measured. As for Theosophy, the mention of which at one

time would excite only his laughter or his scorn, he admitted that it was more reasonable far than Calvinism, for instance, or indeed than any system of dogma which he had yet known. "It is practical religion, the religion of common sense," he told Amy, "and fitted for the every-day life of every one."

For hours he would sit smoking his pipe, and listening to the mellifluous, picturesque speech of his guest, whose mind seemed to hold wisdom in its essence. Mysteries rolled away, and all became simple and reasonable cause and effect. Not one arbitrary touch remained to offend or antagonize him. Ascribing all imaginable good to the Supreme Being, instead of clothing him with hateful passions, making him a being capable of consuming wrath and vengeance, Mazoombah would say:

"Would you know His designs for the race of man? Then try to imagine the greatest possible good that could come to humanity. This is the keynote to the administration of the Most High. He is most bounteous, bestowing more than we know how to ask or to receive.

Everything is offered, and we take only the crumbs! We need not grow old. There is no need for those silver threads I see there, my friend, nor for that incipient baldness I discover on your head."

"Now, Doctor, you are going a little too far. Do you mean that we may preserve our youth eternally?"

"Not precisely that. We will ripen, but we need not decay. It would be unmeet for a man of my age to look like a youth of twenty; that would not suit my developed mind and nature; but the tissues need not shrink or weaken. Old age would be beautiful were there no decay. And there is no slightest reason why a man at fifty should be physically any older than at thirty; indeed, he will not be, if he lives in harmony with divine law.

"This can be explained upon perfectly simple and reasonable principles, although there is a scientific view of it which men will comprehend later. The brain is a tremendous storage-battery of electro-magnetic force—the sympathetic vibrations of Nature—the creative force

of forces. This force is not only creative, but of necessity reparative also. As a man becomes master of himself, he becomes conscious of this force, and by bringing his will to bear can direct it to any part of his organism where it may be required. This is the scientific fact ; but the perfectly practical explanation, which may be understood by anyone is that the condition of the body is dependent upon the law of supply and exhaust. If you live a life of equipoise, there is little waste of the vital forces from friction. Let society be alternated with solitude ; in contemplation of lofty themes, unconscious of self, let the desires and aspirations reach out till they comprehend the good of the entire race Your soul is being nourished then by thousands of streams instead of one. In other words, I should say that your friend in London, is leading the ideal life ; and I venture that twenty years will pass over him without leaving a visible trace of time. He will unfold, improve ; his face will tell of a richer development ; but there will be no decay, and youth—abounding, joyous youth—will abide with him for many, many years."

"By George, Doctor, I wish you'd make such a prophecy for me! I'm afraid it will be a long time before I get a grip on that electro-magnetic battery in my brain, of which you speak."

Mazoombah smiled. "You are doing very well. There is a great awakening going on in your nature, my dear friend. The spiritual is stirring with a new life. Do you know," he went on, "do you know what is the sin underlying all others? The sin of ignorance. Men are not fools, not brutes. When they really understand the truth, they are admonished by it. Your Christ came to bring light into the world—in other words, to banish ignorance; and yet you people in the West believe that sin and suffering came by Adam's eating of the Tree of Knowledge. Does this seem to you very reasonable, when to-day we are all striving for the very knowledge of good and evil which was forbidden to the so-called Adam? And the race is condemned because he sought wisdom, to know good from evil."

CHAPTER VIII.

NINETEEN years had passed. But no other children had been born into the Stoddard household, save the singularly lovely Aleita. Her education had been conducted at home. Teachers had but to show the way, and she seemed to follow it with the swiftness of intuition. Doctor Mazoombah had inspired her with a desire to visit the East. "Next year, perhaps, darling," her father had said; "and then we will stop in London and see Mr. Irving, and what he is doing there."

This had long been planned, but the mother's delicate state of health had deferred it from time to time. Aleita lived a life of extreme seclusion. She had made no intimate friendships —girls did not seem to understand her, and she was quite sure she did not understand them.

On the rare occasions when she appeared upon the street, admiring eyes followed in a sort of wonder as she floated, rather than walked, down the broad avenues. Doctor Mazoomba was envied. Mr. Stoddard did not open his doors to the young men who stood without, casting longing glances at the fair lily so carefully guarded within.

Aleita had heard all her life of Reginald and his splendid work of reform in great London, far over the seas.

"Oh," she would say, "that is a life worth living. I wish I could know him and tell him how I honor him for what he has done. It is so dreadful to think of sorrow and suffering, when existence was made to be such a joy!"

A fresh wreath of shining laurel was kept by her about his portrait in the library. Her father laughed at her enthusiasm. "What a little hero-worshiper you are!" he said, kissing her. "Well, you will be able soon to place the crown on the head of the original of the picture. He is coming home for a visit."

"Oh, papa, is he really coming so very soon?"

"Yes; I had a letter from him this morning. He is on his way now; will be here—let me see —Thursday, Friday, yes, Saturday morning."

There was sincere rejoicing over this news, and great preparation and planning for the reception of this dearest of friends.

Reginald's work was completed. He might go on adding and adding for years; but if he should never touch it more, it stood a monument to faithful and successful endeavor founded in human hearts.

A beautiful temple had risen in the midst of the squalor and darkness, dedicated to all pursuits and enjoyments which bring light and life to the soul of man; and in connection with this a system of bestowing was adopted which, so far as possible, prevented deceit and facilitated speedy and effective relief. It would be impossible to number the wretched, perishing beings who had been, not alone nourished, but, far better, reclaimed—the souls which had been awakened to the higher life.

There was no danger of relapse now. The project had acquired a momentum which no

longer needed his impelling, guiding hand. The time had come when he might go home, and an impulse made him feel that he must go. He could trust himself now—he had conquered. The memory of that blissful hour had become an inspiration, not a temptation.

He reached home one beautiful June morning. What changes nineteen years had wrought! How beautiful the city had grown! Would he find the grove, his enchanted grove? or was it desecrated by improvements? He shuddered at the thought. He would go there at once—no one knew of his arrival, and the evening he would spend with his friends, the Stoddards. He winced to think of the girl who bore that sacred name. How could he bear to hear her called Aleita? She must be eighteen years old, "plays lawn tennis, I suppose, and dances the German, paints terrible things in china, and has fashionable fads. Ah, well, it's part of the discipline; I must meet it and endure it. And Amy, dear, kind, sympathetic Amy, will expect me to be pleased, and I must not hurt her. It was intended kindly."

Such were Reginald's thoughts as he approached the precincts of the grove and entered the shadow of its great trees. It was unchanged. There were the pyramid of wild roses; the brown pine-needles lay upon the ground; the wind sighed through the trees just as it did that wonderful morning in June nearly twenty years ago.

A torrent of emotion, long locked in his breast, swept over him. Should he speak the word? Had he not striven, and earned the right to see her once—only once? And would she come? As he hesitated, his head bent down, he heard light footsteps and the faint rustle of garments. Looking up, he beheld a young girl, all unconscious of his presence, her eyes fixed upon a book as she slowly advanced into the cool shadow of the grove. There she was, in the dewy freshness of youth, clad all in white, his Aleita—the same, the very same, but oh, so real, so human!

He stood as if turned to stone. As she reached the spot where Aleita had stood nineteen years ago, she paused, and he exclaimed, "Aleita!"

She looked up, like a startled fawn, ready for flight, but almost instantly the look of alarm was replaced by one of wonder, then of delight, and she stretched out her hand, exclaiming :

"Why, it is Mr. Irving!"

A deeper color suffused her face, as she added, with an apologetic smile,

"I knew you at once, Mr. Irving, from your picture. But how did you know me?"

He knew not whether he had answered or no, as she went on :

"This is my grove. I come here with my books every day, and no one has ever intruded before; so I was startled until I recognized you."

Did he imagine it, or was she really so like that other? The conviction grew. Identical, in form, feature, speech, spirit. What did it mean? Would she float away into space and disappear—a deluding vision?

No; she stood, her book in one hand, the other lightly holding her white draperies, her childish lips slightly parted in pleased surprise. She was a daughter of earth, not of the skies.

Would he never speak? thought Aleita. And why did he keep his beautiful, grave eyes fixed upon her with such a strange expression?

A bewildering suspicion was dawning in Reginald's mind. Was this in very truth Aleita? And was she his friend's daughter? He must say something. He felt as if struggling back to consciousness from a trance.

"So you are the daughter of my old friend," he stammered.

"Yes," she answered, smiling. "I am Aleita Stoddard."

He gasped, and pressed one hand tightly over his heart to still its wild beatings before he trusted himself to speak again.

"And did you say this is your grove?" watching her closely, as he held her extended hand tightly in his.

"Yes, indeed," she answered, looking about her. "Don't you think it is lovely here? No one seems to know about it, and I come here and dream—and dream for hours at a time."

"I wonder what sort of dreams you have? Do you know there was once a wonderful

dream dreamed here? It was more than a dream—a romance!"

Her eyes grew large and full of interest.

"A real romance?" she asked.

"Yes, a real romance, one that changed the whole current of a man's life," and he tried to read the heart's secret through that fair young face.

But no chord of sympathy vibrated in response.

"I thought perhaps you might have dreamed of this romance, Aleita."

"Oh, no," she said, laughing. "I never knew anything about that. I dream of places where there is no suffering, no sin, no sorrow, where beings are all radiant and beautiful, with joy in their hearts."

Then, with a little sigh: "But it's foolish to dream. *You* have not wasted your life in dreaming. I have so wanted to tell you how I feel about your work. Oh, it is so divine to help others!" She clasped her hands with enthusiastic warmth. "It is such a beautiful thing to bring light into the world! I only absorb sun-

shine and am unable to bring it into the lives of others."

"Indeed, you look as if you had been fed upon something very radiant," Reginald replied as he continued his earnest look.

She met his admiring gaze with simple confidence. She knew she was going to like this friend of her father's; and, entirely at her ease now, she chatted as they walked along toward home.

"You are much younger looking than I expected," she said, glancing at him a little shyly. "Why, papa's hair is quite streaked with gray and he looks much older than you do. How surprised and delighted they will be, and how they will wonder where I found you!"

CHAPTER IX.

A FEW moments later Reginald Irving was held in the strong embrace of his old friend Stoddard.

"Well, I should say so," he exclaimed, holding him off at arm's length. "Mazoombah was right. You do not look one day older. Amy, look! Isn't this amazing? Why, Rex, how have you done it? Did you find a fountain of youth over there in the Whitechapel district?"

His friend laughed. "That is just what I did find. Men need not grow old, Stoddard. Only get lost in the welfare of others, and old Time cannot find you, to affix his signet."

"Yes, I know. Mazoombah has been telling me all about that; but somehow I can't apply it. Look here," and he pointed to the frosting above his temples. "And so you met

Aleita, and she knew you? Well, what do you think of our little girl?" drawing her toward him with a look of intense pride and satisfaction.

How could Reginald have told what he thought? He was thinking unutterable things, and treading on air. But there was no need for answer. A soft white hand was placed over Stoddard's lips and a laughing voice said,

"We are not going to talk of your little girl at all, papa. Mr. Irving is going to tell us all about his wonderful Temple, about the Music Hall, the Hall of Entertainment, and how the people looked and acted at first," clasping her hands. "O Mr. Irving, your descriptions of it were more interesting than any romance. How did you happen to think of it? What suggested it? Will you tell me all about it some day?"

"Yes," he answered, looking at her with a strange intentness, "some day perhaps I will tell you all about it—what suggested it, how I was led to think of it. You shall know all."

He was completely master of himself now. Doctor Mazoombah joined them, and the evening passed in delightful and natural converse.

At last Reginald was under the stars, the necessity for self-control was over. An agitation too deep for words stirred his soul. He could not go home; his feet unconsciously led him back to the grove.

As he entered the shadow, he was aware of a presence. With no surprise he looked up, and saw Alta smiling approvingly upon him.

"My son," he said, "you have done well. You will receive your reward."

Throwing himself at the feet of the well-remembered form, he cried,

"O, Sire, tell me, in mercy tell me, is it really, in very truth Aleita? Has she come to me in earthly guise?"

"Yes, it is she. It had to be so. You know she told you, that day long ago, that it was dangerous to wish; that a desire was an active, not a passive force. The desires of the heart are the wings of the spirit, upon which it flies to its goal as surely as the needle turns to the pole. I saw she would have to come and learn the lesson of life over again through matter, although there was no need, I am sure, except

her great love for you. But I have not regretted it."

"Does she know of the past?"

"Of course not now, or so fully as she will in time. Do you know of your former existence, or of the interval before you returned in your present form? Perhaps a vague idea, as of a long passed dream. No, she does not realize it, but she has all the fulness of soul development acquired by her past experiences. This terrestrial abode has done her no harm. They do not often return after reaching the full measure of attainments that she had; but she so strongly desired it that it had to be. Such things are not determined arbitrarily any more than are changes in chemical combination. All the matter in creation could not imprison a soul in a sphere to which it has become unsuited in condition."

Reginald was listening breathlessly, his heart beating so that he felt suffocated. There were a thousand questions he longed to ask, and the time might be so brief.

"Has she unusual powers latent within her?

Might she soar with me through space as before?"

"Yes and no. She might leave the physical body for a time, but this cannot always be done with safety, and, indeed, is always fraught with more or less danger. She has chosen to learn over again the physical lesson with you, and must not seek to partake of the joys of existence on two planes at once."

"And this body I see you wear—is it fashioned like ours, out of the same elements?"

"Precisely, only more sublimated. I have the power to collect the elements which are all around us here, and organize them on the instant, a process that would take years by the slow operation of physical laws, and in like manner to dissolve and scatter them into space again just as quickly. This seems marvelous to you, but it is as simple and as natural as any process practised by man. The miracle line recedes as the line of knowledge advances. You perform a miracle when you send a message under the sea to your friend in London. I perform a miracle when I appear before you to-

day clothed in flesh. It is by miracle that Aleita, constrained by the love of one, was born again into this world; that the One grand soul, the Christ, constrained by a high and holy love for humanity, returned to the earth life in the flesh, not, as theologians teach, as a sacrifice to an offended and avenging God, but in obedience to an irresistible love, an impulse to serve and to elevate the race of mankind by his simple life.

"So these are miracles only to those who do not understand the law. They are governed by a law, and that law is now in force as fully as it ever has been or will be; any seeming changes are the result of change in the conditions of matter through which the law is made manifest to the children of earth. You, too, were born in strict accordance with this identical law, and so all others, each, according to his power, partaking in a greater or lesser degree of the divine wisdom, power, essence. The Church teaches that Christ, of his own free will and accord, as part of the Godhead, was incarnated. So are we all incarnated, or reincarnated—some from a higher and some from a

lower motive, but none so sublime as His. Our lives in the great eternity are made up of experiences of periods of threescore years and ten, in the same way that this period is made up of daily activities, followed by the rest of night; and we pass as naturally from the spiritual rest to this physical activity through reincarnation, as we do from the hours of sleep to our daily duties, and birth follows death as naturally and as simply as death follows life. Each new earth experience involves a round of object lessons, comprising the grand kindergarten course of the physical world. Our great hindrance is that, worse than children, we hold on to our symbols—the globes, the cubes, the triangles, the lines, representing wealth, power, place, preferment. We cling to them and they to us, until, like a millstone about our necks, they sink the spirit deeper and deeper into the material plane. Only by some providential stroke of the sword of justice is the connecting bond cut asunder, and the spirit made free from such a physical yoke."

"You ask if Aleita possesses powers unusual.

She does, but is not conscious of them. She has passed upward from the lower school of matter, and her soul holds its secrets as a child holds inherited powers, instinctively but unconsciously; and she might dissolve the body and set the spirit free, as though physical death had released it, and then reassemble those particles again and find her soul clothed as before. She would not know the process, but a powerful desire might accomplish it. She must not be aware of such power yet. Mortals are not to be trusted with it at all times and under all conditions. Untold harm has come from tampering with the processes of Nature on this higher plane.

"Earthly existence is a school in which is learned the nature and control of matter in its grossest forms. The lesson begins at the cradle and ends at the grave of each physical existence. Then the liberated soul enters upon a course of dealing with a more sublimated form of matter, controlled by a higher set of laws and forces, whose action is known as 'affinity' and 'attraction,' just as in the nomenclature of

the lower school. Your spiritual body lives among these forces and is composed of particles of this higher form of matter, which are emanations or an outgrowth from your lower physical body; and just as your earthly form is related to your perceptions now, so is the spiritual body related to the more exalted perceptions in its lofty environment. But before it is ready for this, the soul must be graduated from the course below. There is no favoritism in this school, no bribing, no shuffling. The diploma must be fairly and honestly earned, and means that there has been emancipation from earth-born desires, and the true value of all material things learned by oft repeated experiences. Aleita's coming back was purely voluntary and hence exceptional, but in accordance with the law of attraction."

"And will she love me, sire," Reginald asked, almost inaudibly.

"How can you ask? Did she not come back because she so loved you? She does not consciously—now; but already the seed is germinating. She is awake at this moment, recalling all you have said to-day, with an interest

never awakened before, and is impatient for the morrow, when she will see you again. She thinks now it is your work which interests her. She exalts you; you are her hero. She has no thought of love; if you spoke of it she would fly from you. But the time is coming, and swiftly, when she will think of it, with all her fully awakened nature, and you will be loved as men are seldom loved in this world, where natures are so imperfect and undeveloped.

"I told you that the renunciation of earth-born desires went hand in hand with the higher attainments. Let me explain that the affections are not so classified. Love is not earth-born, but heaven-born and imperishable. The liberated soul never gets beyond sympathetic touch with those it has loved on earth; again and again it is recalled to comfort and sustain. The world would soon sink and perish but for this ministry of the departed. Wherever hearts are aching and breaking, there, you may be sure, are ministering and guardian angels, flooding with light and consoling with hope and love. So Aleita's drawing toward earth was en-

tirely in a line with her highest development, though dangerous—very dangerous, to herself. You might have failed her, might have married. No, you need not disclaim it: some one, perhaps, loved you, and was unhappy. Twenty years was long to work and wait so faithfully with no definite hope; and you might have lived out your life with a tolerable degree of content. Of course with no joy such as comes from a heaven-born marriage. I mean a harmonious marriage.

"And Aleita would never have loved, but she too might have married, from pity perhaps. She is sympathetic, impressible, trusting; and I tremble when I think what harm such a union with an inferior nature might have wrought. She might have hated—yes, hated her husband. And hatred is the most destructive of forces; it corrodes, destroys the finer natures. I have no power to absolutely foresee; that is, only a little more than you; so I often tremble at what might come. Of course, my knowledge of what exists gives a wider sweep to my vision and enables me to see to some extent into the future;

although I am not a prophet. But this I know. She will love you, her heart will turn to you as the flower to the sun, expanding and unfolding in the sunshine of happiness. All unconscious of her own richer nature, she will tremble before your superiority."

Reginald covered his face with his hands. "Oh, this must not be! I am unworthy of this. Unworthy of her love."

"Certainly you are unworthy," replied Alta, smiling. "No man deserves the sort of worship a superior woman is capable of. But you may keep it, for all that."

"How? In pity tell me how to keep and deserve such love, Sire."

"Simply by letting her see you entirely devoted to some practical pursuit with which her exalted nature is in sympathy. So long as she sees you energetically and wisely accomplishing the good of your race, so long will she continue to tremble at your touch and be thrilled by your words. If she finds in you simply a lover and a dreamer, she will esteem you accordingly. Keep your feet firmly planted upon the earth,

with an underlying consciousness of the force and reality of spiritual things. But keep all your living energies directed to the world of visible realities and their ultimates, which lie beyond and above.

"I will see you again, my son. Farewell." And Alta was gone in an instant.

CHAPTER X.

REGINALD IRVING wended his way homeward with a heart brimming with hopes and full of a deep love for Aleita, whom he now realized had come into his plane of existence since he could not pass to hers. He was not ripe for Heaven, so Heaven had come to him! What a miracle love had wrought!

The weeks glided swiftly away. Reginald was never permitted to be long away from his friends. Richard could not bear to leave him out of his sight. Amy basked in the light of his congenial presence, and Aleita—well, Alta was right. The flower was turning toward the sun. Something new and subtle was coming into her life. Was it joy or pain? She knew not.

"Richard," said his wife, "I have something very serious to say to you."

"Well," said he, sitting down beside her, "what is it? Anything gone wrong, my dear?"

"Oh, no, not wrong; but, Richard, do you know, I think Aleita is seriously interested in Reginald."

Her husband gave a start of amazement "Amy, are you losing your senses? That child interested in Reginald!"

"In the first place, Richard, she is not a child any longer, but is eighteen years old: and in the second place, I am not losing, but using my senses. I see some things now more clearly than you do, my dear Richard. You did not observe her the first morning he went away?"

"Why, no. What was there to observe?"

"Why, when I saw him coming down the avenue, I exclaimed, 'There comes Reginald Irving,' and she rose instantly, turned as white as her dress, and made an excuse to go up-stairs, and when I sent for her to come down and look at the photographs of the temple he had brought, her hand trembled so that she could scarcely hold them."

Richard looked grave. "Amy, are you sure of this?"

"Perfectly sure. Richard, she loves Reginald."

"Well," he drew his hand quickly across his eyes, "she seems such a child to me! But if she must love anyone, I am glad it is he. He is the only man in the world who is worthy of her."

"Do you know, I have wondered"—and she looked timidly at her husband, and hesitated—"I have often thought—I know you will exclaim at this—I have often thought that perhaps the spirit of that beautiful being Rex saw in his vision, and painted in words so glowing as to make me see her, is personated in my child. Now I know what you are going to say."

"Well, Amy, for a sensible woman, you do have more absurd vagaries! But, for heaven's sake, do not let her get hold of such an idea. You have not told her about that vision?"

"Never a word.

"Well, never do. And Rex, he wouldn't tell her, would he? He has thrown over all that rubbish long ago. He's a thoroughly practical, splendid fellow. My son-in-law, eh? Well,

that would be a curious thing. By the way, he is coming home to-night. I had this telegram this morning from New York:

"Will be with you this evening.

"REGINALD IRVING."

"Oh, I am so glad," said Amy, fervently. "The dear child has gone about alone and looking like a ghost since he left us last week."

To Reginald a week had been like a year, and the limited express seemed to creep as it carried him back to light, life, and joy. There had not been one word of love. But he knew. He had watched, and had seen the "flower turning toward her sun." She loved him, and the time was near when he might speak; perhaps to-night.

He hastened to the house. She did not hear him, knew not his presence until he stood directly before her, both her trembling hands in his, his eyes looking searchingly down into her own.

"Aleita, do you know, darling, that we belong to each other, that your soul is the other

half of my own? And that is the reason I cannot exist without you."

Her hands which lay passively in his, trembled like a frightened dove.

"And you love me?" she said in a sort of wonder. "Why should you? I am only a foolish girl, a dreamer, while you, oh, Mr. Irving!" and Aleita looked at him with eyes of a worshiper. Then he folded her in his arms and kissed fervently again those dear lips which had blessed him so abundantly now and before.

With her head resting on his shoulder Reginald was telling of his deep unspeakable love, when Richard Stoddard and his wife entered. Aleita looked up, coloring slightly as Reginald still holding her in his firm embrace turned, saying, "You see I have captured your Aleita and with your consent will make her my wife. Have I your good wishes?"

Richard embraced them as they stood and both father and mother kissed and congratulated the happy pair.

CHAPTER XI.

It was with curiously mingled feelings that the little group gathered about the blazing fire that evening. Aleita's father had not yet recovered from his astonishment at the speedy fulfillment of Amy's prophecy.

"Your mother's keen eyes saw what was coming," said he, fondly stroking his daughter's fair hair. "And I, I am so slow to see these things. I hadn't observed that you had grown up, you little puss. Well, Rex, I know you'll take good care of her. I do not think I could give her to any one else. But—there must be no more flights with the angels" he added in an undertone.

Reginald laughed, and shaking his head said, "Never fear. There is but one angel in the universe for me now."

Aleita looked curiously from one to the other, wondering what this meant. She would ask Reginald when they were alone, not now. The hour was too heavily freighted with joy, with a sense of such perfect peace and completeness. She must be silent. There would be time enough to ask questions, and find out all there was in his mind and heart.

Later in the evening Richard drew his friend aside.

"Rex, you have never told her about that strange experience of yours?"

"Never a single word, Richard."

"That is right. I never would."

Doctor Mazoombah came in, and of course was told what had happened. But there was no need. He too had seen what was coming, and felt, as soon as he entered the room, that his little friend and companion had already given herself to Reginald.

There was some talk of the grove. Richard had only seen, not known of it.

"You must go there, papa," said Aleita. "Why could not we all go there and have tea

some afternoon? Doctor, you will go with us, will you not? And we will have Chinese lanterns hung on the trees, and spend the evening," said she, kindling with girlish enthusiasm.

"If I might be permitted to arrange all that, said the doctor, deferentially bowing, "I would be much pleased."

"Indeed you shall," said Aleita. "How enchanting it will be! You shall look after the illumination, Doctor Mazoombah, and I will provide the supper."

"And if you will allow me, I will add a few comforts, for if I am not mistaken, it is only fitted for the entertainment of *naiads* and *dryads* at present," persisted the doctor.

So it was all arranged; and late one afternoon, when the hazy Indian summer was at the height of its glory, the trees and vines of that secluded spot with the thousands of twittering birds were astonished by the sound of voices, laughter, and approaching footsteps.

"Papa, do you wonder that I love to come here? Is it not beautiful? But what is this—a pavilion? Doctor, this must be your work.

And rugs and oriental hangings! Why, what an Eastern palace you have made of it! You are a magician, I am quite sure."

The doctor gave a pleased laugh. "I am glad you like it. You will not see it in its full splendor until evening."

"Well, we must have our tea first. Come, my Rex, you must be useful," and Aleita blushed as she called her lover by his first name. "We will spread the cloth on this mossy mound, and we can sit upon some of Doctor Mazoombah's delightful rugs. Oh, what glorious fun it is!" and Aleita busied herself with the tea.

Could anything be more enchanting than she was, flitting here and there like a delighted child, in that strange setting of autumnal foliage, mingled with things rich, rare, and strange, which the doctor had scattered about with an artistic and lavish hand.

Reginald forgot to be useful. He could not remove his eyes from her—so completely simple and childlike, so far removed from the world of phantasms. A vague doubt was forming in his mind. She was in no wise different,

except in degree, from any child of earth. He could not fully identify her with the being with whom he had visited the stars. Was this the same Aleita? How he longed to know!

"You are not a good waiter at all," said she, to Reginald. "You must keep your mind on what you are doing, sir, just as papa does. See, you have spilled the cream on Doctor Mazoombah's beautiful rug."

Recalled to earth, he was properly contrite and promised to try and do better in the performance of his duties.

The hours stole swiftly by. As twilight began to deepen a hush seemed to fall upon the assembled people who sat watching the day fade into night. Aleita's mood had changed. She crept close to Reginald's side, her hand clasped within his own.

Did they imagine it, or was there a return of the waves of light? Was it only an afterglow?

A purpose was vaguely forming in Reginald's mind. Would she respond to an unuttered wish if he impelled it strongly? He would try, and if she did, then he would take that as an

indication that he might speak that long unuttered word.

The purpose had become a resolve. Absolute stillness had fallen upon the place. He turned Aleita's face toward his own, then fixed his eyes upon hers, intently, almost sternly, saying to himself, "Arise, go to the spot where I first beheld you."

Instantly she withdrew her hand from his, and lightly rising to her feet, walked as if in a dream to the spot on which she had stood when she first saw him that afternoon four months ago, and where he had first seen Aleita, nineteen years before. There she stood perfectly still, with eyes cast down.

The softly diffused light had deepened. Every outline of every branch and tendril shone in a soft, mysterious glow. The pavilion began to gleam with color, as of light from within shining through the draperies and hangings.

The beautiful child's mother trembled violently. It seemed as if some strange crisis was approaching. Everything was aglow with a beautiful soft light.

"Madam," said the doctor, gently placing a reassuring hand on her arm, "do not be disturbed. It is all perfectly natural. You only behold now, what an obedient servant matter becomes in the hands of one who understands its laws."

"But Aleitia," she said. "Look at her. What does this mean, Doctor?"

Everyone was watching her breathlessly, as she stood there, clothed in such a strange radiance.

The moment had come. With a resolute step Reginald advanced, took her hand in his, and leaning over her, whispered one word in her attentive ear.

She started. A look of bewilderment changed into one of surprise, then joy. Clasping her hands together, as if in wonder, she looked about her, not at those who were watching her, but beyond, through them, at the distant stars and encircling trees, vines, and shadows, a smile of delighted wonder in her eyes and upon her lips.

"The same, the very same. Here I stood,

his hand in mine. Rex! My King! We rose from this very spot, up, up, into the blue ether. Then we looked down, and saw the dome, and the broad avenues and trees of a fair city, hazy and beautiful as a dream. Then away, farther, farther, over the mountain-tops. But, oh!" shuddering, "why did we alight? I could not walk, his arm seemed so weak and frail, and I so helpless, and entangled with those dreadful vines and sharp stones. The darkness, the despair—it all comes back. Then, oh, the joy of deliverance! Some one came, and lifted us up, up again, and we were away, earth receding, and those other worlds growing in light and splendor, and I so safe and triumphant, with his arms encircling me!"

She looked like a spirit indeed as she uttered these words.

It would be impossible to depict the feelings of those who witnessed this scene. Amy stood leaning forward, with clasped hands, tears rolling down her cheeks, as she saw the confirmation of what she had for years believed. She gave a swift glance at her husband. Beads of

"Network of vines entangled them ; sharp stones cut their feet."—*See page* 31.

perspiration stood upon his forehead, a look of consternation was on his face, as he whispered to his wife, almost fiercely grasping her arm as he did so,

"I ask again, did you tell the child of that vision?"

"No, certainly not."

"Did any one tell her?"

"No, no one has told the child, I am quite sure."

"Then, my God! it must be true, as you suspected."

Aleita paused after uttering the last words; the luminous mist seemed to be crystallizing into an iridescent glow, which blazed from every branch with the splendor of jewels as in the sunlight. The hangings at the entrance of the pavilion were slowly drawn aside. Aleita, with her sentence unfinished, had fastened her gaze upon them, as if in expectation. She gave a cry as she sprang forward, and, gazing with love and confidence into the eyes of the majestic being who stood disclosed, placed both her hands in his, and said, "Alta, father!"

"My child," said Alta, taking her into his arms, "the truth has been revealed to you. It was all as you recalled it. You loved him, you would return, and take up the earth life again. Now, come what may, live it out bravely and unfalteringly to the close."

Then extending a hand to her lover, he placed her hand in his, as he said, "Reginald and Aleita, I give you one to the other in perfect love and confidence. You belong to each other eternally. All the hosts of heaven could not sunder you, even though no priest ever uttered the words which unite you. Farewell, we shall meet again," and with a majestic sweep of the hand he vanished.

The lights began to grow dim. The cabalistic lines wrought in the rugs, which had been like lines of fire, slowly faded into darkness.

Aleita stood speechless, trembling, her hand resting in her lover's. The grove, lighted now only by rifts of moonlight, lay in deep shadow and perfect stillness.

In silence and awe, they all returned to their home.

"Amy," said her husband, "you know more

about some things than I do; but I always knew she was an angel."

Not many days after these events, three carriages stood in front of the church, while within the pastor was uttering the words which united, by the laws of Church and State, two happy human hearts and lives, as Reginald and Aleita were made one by human ritual. They came down the aisle, she more beautiful than ever before; and—was there a choir of angelic voices chanting a glad anthem, or did the assembly only imagine they heard the glad tidings of peace on earth and good-will toward men?"

CHAPTER XII.

THE steamer which was speeding its way toward the East, bore two beings who believed they had touched the highest pinnacle of earthly joy. Reginald and Aleita sat hand-in-hand, silent, with unutterable content. As he traced the outline of her face and form in the starlight, he trembled lest it should vanish as it had done once before. He asked himself again and again if it could be true, that this being of another world, this angel of his dream, had become a thing of flesh and blood, and was his wife—his wife! O God! what had he done to deserve such a joy? What could he give—what service perform, in exchange for such blessedness?

"My darling," he whispered, gathering the frail girl in his arms, "I am frightened at my happiness! And you, dear," he said, kissing

the happy tears which filled her eyes, "you too are trembling with a happiness as great as my own. Shall I tell you why? It is because our souls belong to each other, and are incomplete when separated. Now, dearest, listen. I am going to tell you the whole story of our love. The time has come when you should know it in all its wonderful completeness. I am going, Aleita, to that distant East, to learn, laboriously and perhaps with pain and suffering, some of the mysteries which were once as an open book to you—you poor darling! How pitiful it seems to me that you gave all the joys of knowing and of being, just to share my poor life! I feel, dear, that I have so little to offer in exchange for such supreme sacrifice and renunciation! I stole you from Heaven! Forgive me, darling"—and dropping on his knees at her feet he buried his face in her lap in deep silence.

"Reginald," she exclaimed, "do not bow before me. I feel so honored by your love. Stand up, my beloved, and look in my eyes while I tell you something which presses upon me for utterance."

She paused—passing her hand slowly across her forehead as if striving to arrange her thought so that she might utter it. Then looking into his eyes, radiant as the angel of his dream, she said:

"You need not tell me—I know it. Not all the time, but in moments like this it has come to me during the past week. I remember how my soul hungered and thirsted for you, and could only reach you in brief moments while you slept. And then—that day of days—that hour of hours in the grove, when your spirit escaped from its prison-home and joined my own!—and together we took that rapturous flight through Ether. It was all so natural and simple to me, but you were so filled with wonder. How glad I was to open such a vision to your soul! What a joy to see your joy, as those points of light expanded into blazing worlds! I think I can show you the star now," said she, springing lightly to her feet and swiftly scanning the spangled heavens above her.

"There—there it is," she cried with a joyous upward movement. "You see dear?—just above

the Pleiades, only a faint little glimmer. But we know—it is a great blazing cluster of worlds. You remember, Reginald, how blinding was the glory of it! And it is just so now, only these poor eyes of ours cannot see it. But what were those pulseless worlds to me? It was thought of you—of you—which filled my soul. And then—O God!—you went back into your prison—and I—all the universe was a prison to me after that. You called it an hour. It might have been an aeon. I knew nothing of time; but only that I had lived while with you, and could not live without you.

"You need not regret it. I had to come, Reginald. My longing for you brought me as surely as gravity brings the avalanche to the earth. And now, dearest, I am not sorry," said she, smiling divinely as she passed her hand with a caressing gesture across his hair. "Nothing can make me sorry. I may suffer—I think I shall. But nothing can make me regret it." She paused, a slight shudder passed through her frame—as she said rapidly: "But harm must not come to you—O, my dear one!—how

could I bear that?" Her eyes, fixed on empty space beyond, began to dilate,—her face grew white and rigid. "Reginald"—she whispered —"I see—what is it? O God!—it is lurid—awful—it is fire," and she clung in wild terror to her husband.

"My darling—it is nothing—there is nothing there, he pleaded, earnestly.

"Oh, don't you see?"—pointing into space—"those flames, they leap and roar like demons. Stay—stay, don't go." With a half cry or moan her head fell on his breast, and she lay lifeless in his arms. He gathered her up like a sleeping child, and laid her upon the couch in their state-room.

Terrified beyond words Reginald knelt beside her, chafing her hands and temples and imploring her to speak to him. In a few moments there was a deep-drawn sigh. The eyelids trembled and then languidly opened.

"What is it, dearest?" said she, with a faint smile. "Did I fall asleep?" and Reginald cried from the depths of his heart, "O Doctor, Doctor, why are you not here in this time of need?"

In the early morning Reginald was on deck, thinking, as he had done during all the silent hours of the night, of that strange scene under the stars the preceding evening. It was only a new miracle confirming the old. She was a transplanted angel, drawn back into earth-life "by the attraction of soul to soul." And as a mortal woman, she was possessed of rare psychic powers, by virtue of her affinities with the higher forms of matter and of force about her. And he asked himself again and again: "What was he, that he should have the love of such a being? Love was growing into adoration, and adoration into worship. The garments she wore, the things she touched were sacred to him. How pale—how white she was as she slept! If she should die! God! Why did not Mazoombah come? He said he would meet them on the steamer. His passage was engaged. Why did he not write? If she became ill who could he ask for help? None of these prying intrusive people. It would be a profanation."

He started. A hand was laid upon his

shoulder with strong, familiar, detaining touch. Turning he stood face to face with Mazoombah.

"You here?" he cried. "I did not know you were on board."

"And I was not until this morning," was the doctor's answer.

"This morning!" gasped Reginald. "Why, we have been out two days!"

"Yes—yes—I know, but to be frank, I thought I might be *de trop*, and I did not intend to go unless I was needed. But last night, when Aleita, when it seemed she might need me I came. How is she? What was the matter. You see I only get impressions, and I do not always know how to construe them. I heard your summons."

Reginald embraced his old friend with grateful fervor, saying, "No matter how you came. You are the one person in the whole world I most wished to see. Come with me where we can talk undisturbed."

After Reginald's recital of what had happened, his friend sat silent for a long time, stroking his beard, apparently lost in thought.

Reginald watched him with a curious min-

gling of confidence and alarm. What was he thinking? What would he say?—this man who could overtake a steamer 800 miles from land because warned by telepathic message that he was needed!

He seemed like an oracle of Fate, who held their destinies in his firm, white, jewelled hand, and could mete out to them life or death.

At last he broke the long silence: "That child you left sleeping down there," pointing towards the stateroom, "is, as I suppose you know, an angel in mortal disguise. But, for all that, you are not to worship her. She cannot lean on you if you are at her feet. There must be equality in a perfect union. There may not be equality in attainments. In this case there cannot be, of course. But your soul in its essence, may be the equal, or even superior to hers. Attainment is after all," said he with an air of abstraction, "from one point of view, an accident. A result of opportunity—partly or wholly development." He then lapsed into silence again. Reginald was striving to wait with composure for him to resume.

"I confess" said he at last, "that this recent development of psychic power is—well—a cause for uneasiness." Reginald winced.

"The danger lies here. She is so much more perfectly attuned to the higher than the lower forms of matter, to the subtler forces than those to which you, I and others respond, that her hold upon life, I frankly tell you, is slight. Unless she sends those psychic roots deep down into the soil of mother earth she will not stay."

"O God! do not say that," cried Reginald covering his face with his hands.

"Then, my dear Reginald, do not awaken memories of that other and higher life. Make the present vital and strong enough to grapple her here quite firmly.

"Now remember, my dear friend, I am speaking not as one inspired; only as a physician with somewhat wider view of causes than others of my profession. You entirely exaggerate my powers. I have observed that, and it pains me. I have studied it in a different way, and drank from deeper fountains perhaps than others; that is all. I myself have no gifts like that child

yonder; but I know something of the subtler processes of nature, of which your occidental world knows nothing. It is not unusual with us, and, my dear Reginald, it really pains me to be considered a superior sort of being.

"You can see my limitations from my inability to understand why I was needed here last night," added the doctor, musingly.

"Nor can I look much farther into the future than you do; except as my wider vision makes me better able to judge of probabilities. Just precisely like your Weather Bureaus," said he, smiling. "All I am good for is to fly the danger-signal when I see a storm approaching; but I cannot avert it, nor predict or absolutely foretell its results. A little knowledge always seems mysterious to the ignorant," added he, as he arose and stretched himself wearily.

"But you came—how was that done?" urged Reginald. "You were in Washington last night? And now this morning you are here."

"Yes, that is quite true."

"And yet you ask me not to consider your powers exalted!"

"Oh, any well-trained earnest soul may obtain almost absolute control over material forces like those which compose our bodies which we have builded ourselves."

"Could I acquire this wonderful power, Doctor?"

"Certainly, and you will," answered the doctor, smiling. Then looking at him intently for a few seconds, with half-closed critical eyes, he added, "You have the true oriental nature. You are an exotic in this Western Hemisphere. You will feel that you are in your native air when you get under the shadow of the Himalayas. Do you know why? But no—not now—another time we will talk of that."

"One thing more," said Reginald, with a detaining hand on the doctor's arm. "The fire, Doctor, what made her see that last night? Her terror was pitiful to witness."

"Well, there may be several explanations. She might have seen the phosphorscence on the water, and in her excited state the impression might have been magnified. It is impossible to explain the vagaries of hysteria or this psychic phenomena."

"It has no other significance?" said Reginald, looking at him intently.

"No, I think not. Now go to your wife. She is awake. That is, I presume so; for I hear her spirit call 'Reginald.'"

CHAPTER XIII.

When left alone the doctor's face changed. He pondered long, with knitted brows and anxious expression. "What does it mean? Fire? —when?—and where?. I feel no discordant vibrations, but nevertheless I will look."

He took from his bosom a small jewelled case, and opening it, took from it a gold-rimmed glass, the size of a gentleman's watch. Then holding it up he looked carefully through it for some moments.

"Nothing—nothing at all," said he. "So there is no immediate danger from fire." He carefully replaced the glass, and resumed his attitude of perplexed thought. "But I must watch. I must keep a ceaseless vigil during the voyage. I could go as I came. But they—what would they do, poor children? Could I see them perish in mid ocean? Horrible! My

beautiful child—have you come back to earth for such a cruel fate as that? To be consumed like a moth in a candle? I told him it meant nothing. God forgive me! It has a terrible meaning, and at no very distant time and place, perhaps."

Later in the day Reginald brought Aleita on deck. She, pale and silent, but with a look of supreme content, nestled among the cushions and rugs on the steamer-chair, her hand clasped in that of her husband. They were watching the sunset when she said:

"What is that, Reginald?" as she pointed towards the setting sun.

"What, my darling? I do not know what you mean?"

"Why, those strange dark lines in the sky?"

"I do not see any lines," said he, trying to follow the direction of her eyes.

"Not see them?" said she, in surprise. Again he looked.

"No dearest. Where?"

Raising herself on her elbow she said, turning to the doctor:

"You see those groups of dark lines forming fantastic figures, do you not, Doctor?"

The old man's face had turned ashen in hue.

"Yes--yes," he said, "I have seen them before. There are so many strange optical effects at sea." Then with wonderful vividness he described a mirage he had seen in the Indian Ocean. The man and the narrative were both so picturesque, it was not strange that two or three in the vicinity drew nearer to listen. Among them was a fair-haired youth. His ulster slightly grazed the back of Aleita's chair. She shuddered perceptibly.

"Are you cold, dearest?" asked Reginald.

"Yes, I am a little chilled," she replied. "Will you take me below?"

Mazoombah went to his stateroom also. His hand trembled as he brought the gold-rimmed glass again from its hiding-place, and again looked at the sky; this time longer and more earnestly.

"No," said he, wiping great beads of perspiration from his forehead. "Nothing fatal, I see—nothing at all alarming. But they are there.

She makes no mistake. This," said he, tapping the glass, "is but a clumsy approach to her more sensitive organism, which perceives the lines in advance. To-morrow this will reveal them too, perhaps."

The next morning Aleita had recovered her natural vivacity. The languor of the day before had gone. Once only did there seem a cloud upon the horizon.

She saw Reginald at a distance talking with that same effeminate youth. Pale and trembling she motioned to Mazoombah to come to her, and said peremptorily, "Go, bring him away."

"Who, my child?"

"Why, Reginald. Don't you see? Don't you see he is with that man?"

He followed her eyes to where the two stood, then smiled and said,

'Why, my dear girl, that is only a——"

"No matter who or what he is," said she impatiently—a red spot burning on each cheek. "Bring him away. Can you not see he is terrible?"

Mazoombah instantly obeyed. As he returned with Reginald he said: "I must see you alone and at once. A storm is gathering. I do not know its nature, but there is danger. Come to my stateroom."

When Reginald joined Mazoombah a few minutes later, he was pacing the narrow limits of his room like a caged lion.

"What do you mean, Doctor? What danger is there?" breathlessly asked he.

"I do not know, Reginald, but look through this, and tell me what you see."

Reginald peered through the gold-rimmed glass for a few seconds, and then said: "I see curious zig-zag lines in groups; very black and threatening."

"Precisely. That is what she saw in the sky yesterday. This glass has been sensitized by a process you may understand some day, and it reveals violent disturbances in forces invisible but terrible. It is the breath of the approaching storm. Some frightful calamity is impending. Her more highly sensitized organism saw it yesterday. This clumsy device reveals it to-day. It is near at hand. Probably to-night."

Reginald's blood seemed turning to ice. His breath came fast and labored. "What is to be done, Doctor? Tell me."

"Nothing but watch. Eyes open and everywhere. There must be no sleep to-night, that is, for you and me. You know the vision she had of fire? That seems to indicate the nature of the disaster. Another thing, that fair-haired youth you were talking with—who is he?"

"I do not know. He was asking me just now my views of a future life. He is a strange sort of a fellow."

"Yes. Well, keep an eye on him. We must not let him be out of our sight. Aleita has an extraordinary aversion for him, and trembles at his approach. That has a meaning. She must sleep to-night. Poor child! I will give her something harmless which will make sure of that. Now go to her. I know you are to be relied upon to be alert, wise, courageous, whatever comes."

The doctor was left alone. But he seemed to be holding converse with some one. He said:

"Ah, my brothers, it is well I came. You

are wise, good and powerful; but this child sees farther than you or I. Will you believe it—where my glass revealed blank nothingness, she saw the danger lines?"

Then lifting his arms in an attitude of supplication, strange musical words in an unknown speech rattled from his tongue, gliding into each other with an oily smoothness and rhythmical harmony.

Then—calm, unruffled, imperturbable, he locked the door of his room after him and his vigil had begun for that long and eventful night.

Mazoombah paced the deck gazing at the stars for some time, and he finally said to himself as it were, "What is life but love, and love but wisdom, and wisdom itself is justice, and justice, law quickened into life and harmony. Thus all of our reasoning runs in a circle, in the same manner as if we go forward continuously to the rising sun; in time we reach our starting-point, if we be only accurate in our line of march. God's love expressed first in the protoplasm, as we speak to man's understanding, so limited, otherwise the protoplasm and all else is life and expressing

God's love; but on our proposition God's love first expressed in the protoplasm, and it teems with tangible life; with this life goes out from the great Creator or Creative force a guarantee of unlimited possibilities, of progression, of elevation through evolution, to each and every animalcule which has responded to the touch of the Creative hand. Discrimination would be destructive of our circle, our arch, based on love. That child whose sensitive organization is so susceptible to the attenuated influences of these coming events and of which we have but now had warning, is only a favorite in the sense that she is further progressed through experiences than some others of us. But the way is open to all, the lowest and the highest alike. And all any one can do, is to make it a question of time when we will attain these, and even higher gifts than these, by helping or hindering this irresistible force of forces." Then he silently descended the companionway to watch with his friend.

CHAPTER XIV.

It was midnight, and Reginald from an obscure corner had seen the fair-haired youth go to his stateroom. "I will remain here," whispered Mazoombah. "You keep watch above. Not in one place but in all."

Just after one o'clock the door of the stateroom quietly opened; the young man with a small satchel in his hand, lightly ascended the companionway.

He did not hear the furtive cat-like tread of the East-Indian behind him. With quick nervous step he reached the deck, and placing the satchel on a seat next the rail, took off his hat, and with a deep-drawn breath looked at the stars.

"Somehow I couldn't do it down there," he said, softly. "The chief actor in a great drama shouldn't skulk in a rat hole," and he laughed a bitter cruel little laugh. "Well, old world, you

have played me some scurvy tricks, and I owe you one. This is to close up our accounts. Good-bye." He reached his hand out toward the satchel, but a powerful blow from behind, felled him to the floor, and as he struggled to his feet he saw the bag propelled swiftly out into the air, describing a long curve down into the sea. With a cry of rage and despair he bounded over the rail and followed it with a plunge head first into the ocean.

"Man overboard! Man overboard!" rang out on the night air. In a few moments a crowd of half-clad people were on the spot, the engines had stopped, a boat had been lowered; and in another five minutes the oars of the returning boat were heard in the stillness, and a poor dripping limp burden was lifted carefully up the ship's side and laid on the deck.

Guided by a swift impulse, which he felt he must obey, Mazoombah had descended to the stateroom from which he had seen the wretched boy emerge only a few minutes before.

It was in wild disorder; clothing, papers strewn over floor and couch, and lying on the

latter an open book, an ink bottle and pen with the ink scarcely dry.

The book had a flexible red morocco cover upon which in gilt letters was inscribed "Diary" to which had been added in ink, "of a fool and a failure."

Placing this book in his bosom Mazoombah returned to the deck. The efforts to resuscitate the poor wretch had been unavailing. The man whose diary he held, was dead.

Reginald was leaning over Aleita listening to her rhythmic breathing. "Thank God, she has heard nothing," said he, with a sigh of relief. Then softly closing the door he went to the room of his friend.

Mazoombah held in his hand the red morocco book. He was very pale. "The danger is passed," said he. "Read that," pointing to the open page.

"*Midnight.*—All is ready, only a few fools linger on deck watching the stars. But I must wait fully an hour to make sure. I have no one but you to talk to, my last and only friend and confidant! It will pass the time and be something to do; better than thinking.

"And you, my stately beauty, my Esther—my temptress—and my ruin. You were not pleased, were you—when you

found I was on board! You turned very white and then very red. It was a pity to spoil your journey, wasn't it?

"I saw you in your lying loveliness go into your stateroom just now, and I laughed. Yes, I laughed. It was almost happiness. I wonder if that dupe who calls you his 'wife,' thinks you love him. Let him make the most of your maddening kisses now; they are his last. I know them well! They fired my brain once, and made me first think I was a poet, and then know, I was a thief and a forger! And it was all for you—that I might be rich enough to marry you. I dreamed of just such a bridal journey with you, and bartered my soul for it, and then lost—curse you!

"But now, in an hour you'll be just as much my bride as his; and I'll take you, and every soul on this ship, on such a bridal journey as was never taken before! We'll not go alone, dear, but in true royal fashion. People will have to accept whether they want to or not.

"They thought they built this ship strong with its stanchions of oak, and ribs of steel; but I have that in this little bag which will scatter its fragments like an egg-shell. And I'm a benefactor in doing it, too. Life is anguish, torture, and annihilation is peace! Nobody knows that I am a thief and a forger but you and I, my confidant, and we will never tell, will we?

"That girl with the fair hair and large blue eyes, who hangs on the words of her husband; who is she? They call her Aleita. Why did she make me tremble? I should have done this last night but for her. The face haunted me through the night and stayed my hand till now."

Aleita beguiled many hours on the steamer in writing a letter to her mother in journal form. The following extract will give further particulars of the tragedy which had occurred on board.

"Oh, mamma! I have such a terrible thing to write to-day! A young man last night, while we all slept, threw himself into the sea! No one knows why life should have been intolerable to a beautiful youth of twenty years; but only that alone and in the darkness, he ended it. And I—who have believed my strongest desire was to help the wretched—to lighten the load of anguish in unhappy lives—I—was unjust to him. Yes—unjust perhaps in my aversion and suspicion. Oh, mamma! I feel such remorse. I can hardly forgive myself. I conceived an aversion for him! I would not let Reginald speak to him or go near him! Only yesterday afternoon, a few hours before his suicide, he tried to draw from Reginald his views of a future life. I saw them together and insisted that Doctor Mazoombah should bring Reginald away. He might have helped him—and I might have helped him too. I am overwhelmed at the recollection.

"They will not let me see him; but I am told he is beautiful in the awful tranquility of death. The burial service will be performed this afternoon. The beautiful lady of whom I wrote you, who was so kind the other day, swooned when she saw him, and has been quite delirious since. The ship's surgeon is taking care of her. She has a dark fierce-

looking husband, whom I do not like. I am sorry for her; but he will not permit me or anyone to do anything for her."

While Aleita was writing these words, her husband and Doctor Mazoombah were alone in earnest conversation.

"But that glass," said Reginald, "by what magic does it reveal such processes?"

"Simply by making visible the invisible. By extending the natural powers of the human eye. There is no more 'magic' in it, than in the microscope. To ignorance the simplest things are mysteries. The savage who first saw one read a message written upon a bit of wood, cried in wonder 'Chip talks!'

"The truth is everything talks; and as man develops he learns to read more and more forward as well as backward. That is all.

"The Western philosophy begins at the wrong end of the problem. That is the reason it gropes and stumbles so. You observe the phenomena, and then work toward the centre; instead of beginning at the centre and working outward to the phenomena.

"To begin with your language is so childish

and misleading. There is no 'magic' but the magic of nature. And the 'Occult' is simply a name for what your undeveloped consciousness has not yet grasped.

"But all this will soon be made plain to you. A calamity or a crime, such as that wretched boy intended, is as much a psychic fact in its intention and preparation, as in its physical culmination. Certain processes attend its approach just as much as in the approach of a cyclone.

"You recollect in your vision of the worshipers in a Cathedral, you saw that they were in a net-work of interlacing lines of force. Those are of the same nature, only different in intensity and kind, from those revealed yesterday by my glass; and knowledge and experience have taught some of us to read their meaning; just as you in your world have learned to read the barometer and the spectrum.

"You are such a child in these matters it is difficult to explain in a way that you can comprehend," said the old man wearily, as he walked the deck back and forward.

"But," he added after a pause, "as I told you,

Reginald, you are a child of the Orient ; by nature and by inheritance. Shall I tell you why ? Your former soul development was under the shadow of the Himalayas. This hunger for truth you have always felt, is a striving to re-assert your former abundant soul-life, and to enter upon that supremacy over natural forces which is your birthright. What others must have years to acquire, you will grasp in months, or at a single glance."

Had a kingdom been promised him, Reginald could not have felt such exaltation.

"And Aleita," inquired he, "will she share it with me ?"

Mazoombah looked grave, almost stern.

"She must have none of it," said he. "Do you not see ?—she is only lightly poised now, between this world and the invisible. Would you have her vanish, melt away from your arms ? No, keep her mind strongly fixed upon her earth-life ; avoid what you call the 'occult' when with her."

"But, Doctor, she is my wife, a part of myself. Our union is too perfect for me to keep from her an object I have so deeply at heart.

How can I give myself fully, as I ought and must, to this pursuit of knowledge, without her knowing it?"

"You can if you must," said Mazoombah dryly. "Self-control is one of the first things you must acquire in order to know and to be. If your wife's highest good requires you not to tell her of your new soul-expansion—why,—you are less of a man than I think you are, if you do inform her.

"The time will come when she can and will share it with you; but not until her earth-life is fortified by new ties and experiences, which are the true source of real power."

The old man was silent for a moment; then placing a hand upon his friend's shoulder and looking straight into his eyes, he said, "Listen—it is not I who am saying this. You are hearing the words of the Master. He has spoken them to me."

There was a profound silence after these words, broken at last by Mazoombah.

"If, as I hope, it is the dawning of a new soul life which has produced these psychic disturb-

ances in your wife, all will be well. You need have no fears then. I do not wonder that you are moved," said he, kindly, laying his hand on Reginald's bowed head. "The child of such a union, and more especially such a mother, should be a rare gift to your race. It may be he will be a leader in the new era and higher development which is coming in your land. It would not be strange, but most natural for this to occur."

Reginald arose, paced two or three times up and down the room; then pausing before Mazoombah he said with broken voice:

"Do with me as you will. I shall try to deserve my happiness. If I ought, as you say, to leave her for a time, forget her, banish her from my life, in order to give myself entirely to the instruction of the Master, I will do it."

"That is well," said the doctor, smiling as he grasped the outstretched hand. "It need not be yet. There is time enough. The place to which I am conducting you is, as you know, very remote, on the southern slope of the Himalayas. But there are several English

speaking families near by. Aleita will have companionship and care, and the comforts to which she is accustomed. She will revel in the natural beauty of the place, find much to interest her in the strangeness of the native life about her. Her physical health will be renewed and abounding. So that the separation from you will not harm her. She has a passionate pity for suffering ; a longing to comfort and relieve. That will be for her as for all of us, the divinest occupation. Encourage it. There is not in the universe, better medicine for the body, nor tonic for the soul. You are only striving after an enlarged consciousness of processes, while such work as I describe, is the power behind the process. Love and mercy and truth are the life of the universe."

CHAPTER XV.

THE journey from Calcutta up the Ganges as far as Dinapur, was long and full of strange interest. Then, the travelers turned toward the great mountain-range stretching like a wall across the northern boundary of India. But it seemed to be ever receding as they struggled to reach its sunny southern slopes. At last Mazoombah pointed to an elevation like a green pyramid, and said, "When we pass that we will see the settlement."

Joyful words! And still more joyful realization! No words can picture, no canvas represent the scene which was suddenly revealed to them as they emerged from a narrow pass which opened as a gateway upon a Paradise; with towering snow-capped mountains affording majestic shelter and blissful repose.

With what a strange thrill did Reginald gaze

at that outline against the sky! And why did they seem to him familiar as the Blue Ridge at Luray? Ah, yes, these were new, and yet they seemed old, acquaintances of days gone by, days of vapory dreams.

Even here in this far off fastness of the Himalayas, a small colony of English people had made their habitation, and joyfully welcomed them. Days and weeks passed on swift pinions. There were exploring parties to places of interest far and near.

A new, fresh, wholesome tide of life had come to Aleita. There were no more visions. No languor, no forebodings of evil.

The solitudes rang with her joyous laugh, as with cheeks dyed a brilliant vermilion, and eyes sparkling, she performed prodigies of climbing. Her husband revelled in her joy and in her unfolding beauty; which opened as a damask rose in the sunlight of a genial clime.

Each day seemed to rivet the chain which bound him to her side. How could he leave her? And how tell her that he must? It was an ever-present shadow in his heart. And it

was with a pang that he left her during the early hours of every morning, for meditation and study in a secluded spot far up the mountain side. While the stars were still shining, and while she still slept, he would climb the dizzy heights, and then strive to forget her, in the mastery of a new and absorbing passion; a passion for knowledge and Divine Truth.

Mazoombah had not misjudged his pupil's love for orientalism. He seemed to be not learning, but recalling what he already knew. As he realized that the time was near when he should hold mastery over matter, instead of matter holding dominion over him, he felt no surprise, but simply that he was coming into his inheritance. He was going to take his rightful place in the universe of atoms. He realized that he was (as are all of us) potentially a God. Did not Christ himself say so? "What I do ye can do also!" And again, "Are ye not all Gods?"

With this consciousness of power came a new exhilaration of spirit which did not escape the all-seeing eye of Mazoombah.

"My son," said he, shaking his head, "you will have much to learn. After you have acquired these things, you will have next to learn not to do them, except in a spirit of prayer. There lies the danger and the snare.

"Oh, my people! My people!" said Mazoombah, solemnly. "You have eaten of the tree of Knowledge and are driven out of Paradise because this knowledge has been used for unholy purposes! My people—the last of an august race, you are counted a nation of miracle-workers, magicians, jugglers! You are less than the least among the nations, degraded by those fakirs!

"I would sweep them all away," said he, with a passionate wave of his outstretched hand. "Wretched beings, who juggle and steal the fire of Heaven for blasphemous purposes! Was it for this that you toiled and suffered? Oh, my Brothers! that a crowd of gaping, ignorant wonder-seekers should watch the growth of a mango tree! or see one of those lying beggars climb into the sky on a rope!—Faugh!" with a gesture of disgust.

"But you do not mean that these things were not done?" asked Reginald.

"I did not say that," was the reply. "But I do say that where their small stock of knowledge, which they sacrilegiously abuse, is insufficient, they piece it out with hynotism and cheating, a most unholy mixture of truth and falsehood."

Here the old man was long silent after this vehemence. Finally he said:

"Reginald, if you do acquire such mastery over nature, as you value your soul's progress beware what you do with it! Remember—any violent reversal of nature's processes of the spiritual law leaves a thousand broken threads, which have all to be knit together again through long laborious waiting and watching. A temple may be taken down by the master builder, the architect, and again resurrected. Yet when rent asunder by great violence, new materials and a new structure is a necessity."

"But you employ these powers," urged Reginald. "You did so when you came to us on the steamer, 800 miles from land."

"Certainly, but I co-operated with Nature in

doing so. There was no conflict. I simply adopted a spiritual law and came by a swifter and more direct method than you had already done by physical law. But, if I should now, as I might, disintegrate this material body for a selfish design of my own, that would be a piece of daring for which I would surely pay the penalty. You cannot set back your watch without injury to its intricate mechanism. Do you think Nature is less complicated, less nicely adjusted?"

CHAPTER XVI.

An ancient city had once stood on a spot about a day's journey from "Paradise," as Aleita had named their abode. Only a few architectural ruins told the story of its past splendor. But Aleita's heart was set upon a visit there. The kind doctor as usual smoothed the practical difficulties in the way, by finding a place where they could comfortably lodge near to the ruins of this long dead city.

The site of the city was a high plateau which overlooked a vast area of rolling surface, stretching like the sea into the horizon; while behind it rose gigantic snow white peaks, like cimeters of glistening steel. The ruins of a wall were distinctly visible on the north and west, partly defining the city limits; while enough of a gateway remained to suggest its colossal proportions and magnificent lines. Time's destroying finger had

been busy with the finer parts of the carvings, but enough remained to show the splendor of the art in that remote age.

From the moment the gateway was passed a spell seemed to fall upon the three explorers. Aleita was silent—awe stricken. The color faded from her cheeks, and her husband trembled when he saw her hand pass several times across her forehead, while she looked with penetrating anxious gaze into space. Suddenly she pointed toward the vine-covered remains of a wall, and said in a whisper:

"There—there they are. Do you see?"

"Who, dear Aleita? What is it, love?"

"Why, the mother—the son, and the beautiful girl he was going to marry I cannot see his face, and his arms are around the young girl, and she is weeping, and he says—sh—sh—I want to hear what he says. The words are strange, but I understand them now—he says, 'Don't weep and break my heart.' He takes a ring off his finger and tells her to keep it. It is a signet ring with a red stone, and cut deep in it, is a crown, and under it a serpent. And the

mother—she does not weep, but keeps her eyes fixed on her son—and prays. Now—he takes them both in his arms and says, 'Help me, O God, to be brave and true.' And to the young girl he whispers, 'Through eternity you will be mine.' Now I cannot see any more," and she sighed deeply. There—there—now I see —such a strange place."

Reginald's face was pale as her own. "What do you see, darling?" he asked, in a hoarse whisper. Again her hand passed across her forehead, and she said wearily,

"I will try to tell you. I do not know that I can.

"It is a city—a strange looking city, with high mountains back of it. Oh—so high! and all shining in the sunlight. The streets are filled with people. It must be a great festival, for there is music—wild and strange—and men with long spears on horseback, and some on elephants and camels, and all wear scarfs upon their heads—some white and some scarlet and yellow, and embroidered brilliant-colored tunics, and there are thousands of jewels flashing in the sunlight—all moving and tossing and changing

like the sea. Some are kneeling—some with their faces on the earth. There is shouting and crying, and some are weeping—others dancing and leaping as if they were mad. They must be waiting for something. They all look toward that castle with wonderful carvings all over it. A great gate is opening now—and—do you hear that?" placing her hands over her ears. "Oh—such a wild shouting, it sounds like a storm at sea. And now there—there—a young man—theone I saw just now—it's the same, —two men with spears are on each side of him. The scarf on his head, and his long robes are dazzling white and, O God! his hands are tied behind him! I cannot see his face, but he walks like a king going to be crowned. Sh—he is speaking softly to himself—'Surrender—suffering—then sacrifice. All is done now. What can I do more than die?'

"The people on foot follow the men with spears and the elephants; a great procession, and he walks at the head—like a king—oh, yes—like a king!

"The awful music and drums and cymbals and shouting It makes a roar like a waterfall,

"They are coming to a great open space, and there stands on a high knoll a cream-white elephant. He is covered with scarlet and embroidery and jewels, and a blazing diamond is on his forehead. They have stopped now. The man sitting on the elephant's head, waves a red flag, and there is a blast of trumpets sounded three times. How still it is in an instant! Some have thrown themselves on their faces on the earth. The young man stands there firm and still in front of the elephant, with a great block of wood at his feet. There's a man with a long flowing beard, and dressed all in white. He is standing up on the back of the elephant. He stretches out his hand and points down to the young man in white robes. His hand trembles. He says:

"'Now you will see what becomes of him who reviles our gods. He thought he knew more than the priests, did he? And he would teach a better religion, would he? Watch and see if his God saves him, when he lays his head on that block.—O thou doomed man, kneel. Yet no. Wait—he is a king's son, so he may look once more upon the mountains and upon the

people. So it is written. I must be just.—Strike off his shackles that he may die as becomes his rank.—Outcast—blasphemer—look your last upon the face of man and great nature, before this sacred animal tramples out your accursed life.'

"I cannot see his face yet—but I feel that it is shining—oh! with such radiance. Now he is turning slowly—looking long with uplifted hands at—O God!—it's Reginald—it's Reginald!" A wild piercing shriek rent the air, and Aleita fell fainting into the arms of her husband.

As Reginald listened to Aleita's recital of what she saw the portals of memory, long closed, seemed striving to open. And there had been a growing conviction that the doomed youth was none other than himself. It needed not the climax of Aleita's recognition for him to know that it was so, as the past ages glided swiftly before him like a panorama.

But now—all was swept away, swallowed up in the present anxiety for Aleita. Mazoombah prepared a bed of rugs and pillows and they laid

her tenderly upon it ; the doctor listening vainly for her breath with a hand upon her pulseless wrist. The seconds seemed hours to Reginald.

"Doctor," whispered he, "how is it with her ?"

"I cannot read the future any more than I can control the present," was the grave reply. Austerity was always the cloak this kind heart wore when deeply moved.

Reginald knew this, and was suffering unspeakable torture in the silence which followed. At last it was broken.

"I think you will have need of all your courage, my poor son ; I can perceive no sign of life.

"The attraction heavenward was strong, and the ties here frail. We could hardly expect—"

"My God !" interrupted Reginald, wildly—"you talk as if she were dead ! What do you mean, man ?" seizing his arm fiercely.

"Be composed," said the doctor, sternly. "Her spirit may be still hovering, and do you not know that a storm of grief may determine its flight ? Do you not think my own heart is

breaking? Why do you suppose I am calm? Is it because I do not feel?" And two great tears rolled down his cheeks and dropped on the white, limp little hand.

Reginald sank on his knees, and buried his face in her pillow, and not a sound broke the stillness as the doctor poured some limpid drops on her tongue and leaned his head upon the breast of the seemingly lifeless girl. Presently he started, and nodded to Reginald. Stronger and stronger grew the faint breathings and pulsations, pallor deepened into the rose tint of health, and she slept sweetly and naturally.

Mazoombah motioned to Reginald to follow him. "We must carry her to the bungalow; she will not awaken, and will sleep probably some hours, and she must be removed before the dew falls."

During all of the still hours of the night the two watchers waited in an adjoining room.

"Will she recollect what she had seen?" asked Reginald.

"Nothing. Did she remember that vision on the steamer?" Then after a pause, Mazoom-

bah continued: "My son, I am entrusted with a commission from the chief of our Brotherhood. Some weeks ago I received from the Master this ring with a message I could not then comprehend. It was 'Give this to the rightful owner, an inheritance from his father, a king.' Take what is your own. It was found in a tomb over yonder, and the Master has kept it for you these many years."

Reginald took the jewel in his hand. It was a large signet ring, and deeply cut on the red stone was a crown and beneath it a serpent.

There could be no words at such a moment as that. Reginald held in his hand the visible link connecting his present and his past life. He sank down upon the rugs speechless and motionless, trying to realize it.

At last he arose. There was a new expression in his pale rigid face, as he said:

"I must be worthy of myself. The soul of a martyr is a great legacy. I must deserve it. I shall go without delay to the Master."

Mazoombah embraced him silently, and during all the hours of their vigil neither spoke again.

Aleita was in a few days as well as before, and not a little mortified that she should have fainted while at the ruined city. There was no pretext now for further delay, and Reginald nerved himself to tell her.

"Dearest," he said, "I am about to put your love and courage to a severe test. I am going away—far away, on urgent business. I may be gone a long time; and I cannot even write you letters."

She looked at him with startled wondering eyes. "Why can you not write?" she faltered.

"Because for one reason, the place is remote and inaccessible. No telegraphs or railroads, dear. You will have to trust me. Will you? Can you trust me?" he trembled and felt like a culprit, as he saw the look of pain and perplexity in her face. But it passed, and placing both hands on his, she answered firmly:

"I cannot understand—but if it is important and urgent, as you say, you must go, and I can wait and watch."

"My darling, you know only necessity would tear me from your side now. May I feel that you are content?"

"Yes—you may—you must feel that I am content and even happy.

"If I think you are unhappy, my dear Aleita, it will weaken my own courage, and will perhaps be fatal to something I have deeply at heart."

"But I shall not be unhappy," said she with a reassuring smile, as she seemed looking far away into space.

CHAPTER XVII.

On the night before his departure Reginald sat watching Mazoombah as he walked back and forth across the floor in deep thought, and he finally broke the long silence by saying: "Doctor, you have several times in our conversations on these occult matters referred to the 'The Christ,' 'The Saviour,' 'The Old and the New Testament,' and always in such a manner as to show how accurate is your information, and the respectful tone would leave one in doubt as to your views of Christ's mission on earth, or His divine origin. Would you be good enough to give me your convictions on the claims of the Christian religion. Briefly as you can, Docor, for I realize that I am asking too much perhaps even in this form."

Mazoombah stopped short in front of his companion stroking his beard continuously until Reg-

inald had finished. Then he said softly with melliffluous vibrations in his voice:

"Yes, I have always spoken with respect for the Christ whom your people revere and worship not only as a God, but as the God. I would not pain you by referring to this Person in an offensive manner if I wished to persuade you to my way of looking at the truth. Nor would I willingly mislead you as to my belief on these matters, which I think so vital to human progress and welfare. Of course you and I can perfectly agree that the New Testament is founded on the Old and that the Divine nature and origin of the Christ is based on the prophecies of this Old Testament. So that in fact the whole Christian religion or scheme of salvation has authority only in the Old Testament. First of all, the necessity for a Saviour comes through the sin of Adam in eating the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden. Now many intelligent and liberal Christians say that the story of the eating of the forbidden fruit and even the Garden of Eden, was one of those Eastern allegories, or of heathen mythology, and that most

advanced Christians nowadays do not believe in the book of Genesis literally, or fiat creation, but in evolution instead. If evolution be substantially true, then man was not made perfect, and fell through eating the forbidden fruit, and God was not angered thereby. Then for what and whence comes the necessity for a Saviour, a sacrifice, the atonement, on which the Christian doctrine rests? No, my dear Reginald, the Old and the New Testaments must stand or fall together, on the old interpretations of infallibility and inspiration. The Old Testament, as all careful thinkers and scholars know, is largely made up from the Pagan writings, from heathen mythology, and in many instances the Jews did not take the trouble to even change the verbiage, to say nothing of the sense, but literally adopted parts they wanted without the slightest change in any respect. Of this we the Brotherhood have living witnesses which we cannot offer you. But "Diegesis" by Rev. Robt. Taylor, A. B., M. R. C. S., which you can obtain at any library, will give you abundant authority for this statement. Now if the Old Testament is

so defective as an inspired work, how can the New Testament, having such a faulty foundation, be true or perfect ?' Indeed the New Testament is much like the Old, borrowed, patched and interpolated, here and there, to suit the purposes of those priests and monks who had the MSS. in keeping for many hundred years before there was any attempt made to publish in book form the Bible. That 'the ends justifies the means,' is the ready defense of the Catholic Church for this and all such acts, we well know. Of course when the Convention of Bishops which formulated the Bible met, there was no pretense of inspiration or authority given them, save that of King James' Commission. The diversity of opinion in the discussions and the votes cast shows how widely divergent were these opinions and convictions of the members. Some of the MSS. submitted as inspired writings were voted out as spurious, by a small majority, and others were voted in as fully inspired by an equally slender plurality. So that you can see how necessary it would be in any student who reads this book to find the truth, to continually weigh the evidence pro and con

and arrive at a conclusion of his own. If the decision of a majority was conclusive evidence of inspiration, or infallibility, then on this majority could rest the claim, otherwise there is a grave doubt ever present in the minds of thinking men on all the important points set forth."

Reginald waited until the doctor had ceased speaking, then he said, "I suppose you would discredit all the miracles performed by the Christ as frauds since they cannot be accounted for by natural law."

"No, my friend, I would not say that these so-called miracles were frauds, but I will say there was great room and inducement for fraud in the performance or the recording of them. You must understand that I do not admit such a thing as a miracle. Whatever takes place is done according to law; and the operation of the occult is the miraculous to the ignorant mind. But there is nothing set forth in the New Testament as having been done or performed by the Christ which cannot be done to-day by some of the Brotherhood if the occasion should require it.

Not as a show, but as a religious duty. Yes, even to rising from the death tomb and rolling back the stone. The turning the water into wine, can be done by many of the initiates, and so on through the list of the so-called miracles. You must remember that the elements out of which the material forms of all things were crystalized, condensed or solidified, are all about us in the air we breathe, the ether above and about us. The sun's rays are filled with these subtle elements, and a strong mind well learned in Nature's higher laws may command them in the instant, and obedience follows. So that in the moment, you have what would have taken months and perhaps years to accomplish by Nature's slower process with which you are familiar."

"Then, Doctor, am I to understand that you believe the Christ was an adept, and that he performed these acts as a religious observance?"

"Hardly so far as that, Reginald," said the doctor, slowly. "I would rather say, if the Christ did perform these acts accredited to him in the New Testament, then I would maintain

that he was an adept, and that it was done in the same manner and by the same laws that they can be done to-day by our Brotherhood. In regard to the terms used by you a while ago referring to God and the Devil, good and evil, I would say that I believe implicitly in a God and I do not believe in a personal devil. God I conceive to occupy the universe in the same sense that your spirit occupies your physical body, and that the same laws which control the universe controls the unit. Do you recall the drop of blood and the beings you beheld therein? So like one of those little creatures are we related to God, as it were circulating in His veins, being a part of the Mighty Whole. The Devil is only evil, ignorance, the absence of wisdom. God—good, are positive; devil—evil, are negative. Wisdom, knowledge—positive; ignorance, sin, suffering—negative. Light, beauty, harmony, are positive; darkness and its concomitants are the negative. So through the whole catalogue we might run.

"Yes, my dear boy," pursued the doctor, smiling, "I see you want the promised expla-

nation of the 'heart's desire, the efficacy of prayer' answered, as I promised.

"Well, what is generally understood as the answer to prayer I do not believe in. Prayer in my view can only be answered when the heart formulates it intelligently and in accordance with the law of our being. Thus if I pray that God will send light, wisdom, peace, and plenty to suffering humanity, in some mysterious way and out of His bountiful love and all powerful will, there would be very small chance for such a prayer to get an early answer. But suppose I pray from the great depths of my heart that I may be imbued with wisdom, love, charity, benevolence, so that I shall go forth with the fervor of spirit which maketh alive and teach and help the lowly, the ignorant, and the suffering, in the highways and byways. Every time that prayer finds utterance, the heart is made warmer, the head wiser, and the hands stronger in the same manner that the muscle responds to the gymnast's repeated exercise, until finally we find ourselves equipped for the task and the prayer answered according to law.

And believe me, my dear Reginald, no other answer can come except in accord with the law of our being, and it is as sure of an answer, as the utterance from the heart is earnest and honest.

"This kind of prayer is the most potent factor in the universe for the redemption of man from the sin of sins, ignorance.

"If it does not weary you too much, Reginald, I could tell you of the answer to prayer in my own experience.

"You will not weary me, Doctor; just wait a moment and I will see how Aleita is resting and then I shall only be too glad to hear you."

Soon Reginald returned and Doctor Mazoombah proceeded with his experience.

"I was many years ago made to suffer as none but a sensitive, loving and confiding nature can. So intense was the anguish from moral and spiritual torture that scalding tears ran down my cheeks for many months, whilst the fires raged within, and finally the tears ceased to flow, the fountains being dried up, and the scorched sands in the heart were almost melted. The spirit sat in

the seat of suffering dumbly waiting for the end to come. I almost ceased to suffer and I tramped over hot plowshares as I stolidly watched sodden humanity battling with this demon of ignorance and oppression, and like a brazen image I said, 'Yes, I know you suffer. So did I once, but be patient—there will come a time when you can no longer suffer, and like myself you will look on the agony of others and feel no pain—no sympathy.' Then I became alarmed at my condition. I tried to help; I strove to express sympathy, all to no purpose; there was no warmth, no love, no fervor. I seemed paralyzed.

"So I tried to pray that I might have a new lease of life, that I might again have love, sympathy, strength, wisdom, that I might again feel and suffer with the unfortunate. Day after day the prayer or the words were uttered, at first as an automaton might pray. The heart could not be brought to respond. A poor woman with a babe in her arms fell exhausted almost at my feet. I took the child in my arms, helped her home, a small meagre room in a hovel, everything so clean but bare of all comforts. The

little one had fallen asleep holding my fingers as I walked along, and I sat holding the little sleeper in my arms as the poor tired mother related her sad story. And when she had finished my heart was in my throat, beating wildly with real sympathy and sorrow as it had not done in years before, and real tears came to my relief. From that time on I could get the heart to pray in earnest, and I have grown stronger day by day. And thus my prayer was answered, as many have been since abundantly fulfilled.

"So much for the Christian religion. Now for the 'Christ.' I would not go so far as many disbelievers and say that there never was such a person as Jesus Christ. But I am compelled to say that I do not believe he was born of a virgin called Mary or of any virgin, nor do I believe that he was any more the Son of God than you or I, except in the degree that he had in previous incarnations acquired through experience more of the Divine wisdom, as is evidenced by the beautiful truths he taught in all of their simple grandeur.

"If his so-called Apostles and followers had been content to teach and follow those simple doctrines of the 'Fatherhood of God, the Motherhood of Nature and the Brotherhood of man,' then indeed would the Christ have come, not in vain. But I will not offend your fine religious sense, which in spite of orthodox theology hath in it the true spirit of the Christ, of our Lord Budah and many other Saviours who came to lift up and not to destroy mankind. So you see, my dear Reginald, you have gotten more than you asked for, but I am sure not more than will profit you, if it is but received in the spirit of love which bestows it."

Reginald grasped the outstretched hand of the doctor with a warmth which left no need of words to show his appreciation of what had been said.

"Then I understand, Doctor, that you do not differ essentially with the spirit of the teachings of the Christ as spoken by himself in all their simplicity and breadth."

"No, certainly not, Reginald. Budah taught these same simple loving doctrines and many of

his followers to-day practice them in their every day life.

"Indeed, my dear boy, there is but scant difference in the essential truths which underlie all the religions of the different races of men. If mankind could only be made to realize that humanity is in truth one great brotherhood, and of one common Father, who without favoritism reads the hearts of his children, and gives to each according to his needs, and his heart's desires; and that no mediator can avail half so much as the faithful child appealing directly to a loving Father. This would simplify religion and do away with the selfish and often hypocritical priests and preachers whose living and profession depends upon magnifying the distance between the Creator and his creatures, the Father and his children. He mystifies the simple things of life and obscures the plain truths, in order to enlarge his office."

"In time, though, Doctor, we will have teachers and preachers who will speak the whole truth unselfishly and without stint, so that religion as you say will be simplified and each individual

can largely do his own thinking on these subjects."

"Truly so, Reginald, and you and I can serve our fellows in no better way than in advancing the dawn of this brighter and better day by all the powers which in us lie."

CHAPTER XVIII.

He had gone. The weeks rolled into months; and six times the moon had waxed and waned—and still he did not come. Aleita bore it with marvelous courage and fortitude, although the doctor saw with many a pang that the burden of silence and mystery was wearing upon her delicate frame. Her large wistful eyes began to pain him so that he had not the courage to meet them. He determined to go, and at once, to urge Reginald's return, and for consultation with the Master.

But that same day when he had gone, the long waiting was ended. In the bright sunshine she saw Reginald enter—safe, smiling, a little pale and worn; but oh! with such joy in his face, as he folded her once more in his arms.

"Did you lose faith in me, darling?" he whispered. "Did you think I was cruel?

Sometime, dear one, I will tell you all—not now," —then holding her at arm's length he looked long and earnestly into the trusting eyes. "And you are well, dear?" said he, tenderly.

"Yes, my Rex, my husband, I am well and happy, now that you are home again."

As soon as the stars were out they wandered far away where they might alone exchange sweet confidences after the long separation. They paused under the shadow of a convent. An old ruin which had been pieced and patched with rambling wooden structures. A high bell-tower in the centre outlined against the sky.

"There is my star," said Aleita, laughingly.

"Your star? Where? What do you mean?" asked he, disturbed.

"Oh, nothing—except that when I was a child a little girl friend and I each selected a star, which we called our own. It was a silly fancy, and I used to talk to mine as if it could hear and answer my questions and requests."

"Where is it?" asked Reginald.

"There—only that little faint star over the Pleiades. Do you see? Why I did not select a sensible star like Orion or——"

Both started in affright. A tongue of flame leaped out of the darkness. The convent was on fire.

"My God! those people are asleep!" gasped Reginald. "I must save them."

Aleita seemed turned to stone. "Yes—you must save them." She spoke the words as if unconscious of uttering them. There was no effort to detain him. Another moment and he had plunged into the lurid darkness of smoke and fire before them.

Did she recall the vision on the deck of the steamer, as she saw the flames leap higher and higher? Did he, as he plunged into the smoke-ladened air?

The whole interior was quickly a great raging furnace; light shining from every crevice, while flames poured from the windows. The tower with heart eaten out by the flames was outlined in black tracery against a fiery background. The black skeleton gave a sidelong lurch, and then above the roar of the flames, the shrieking of the inmates and the cries of the rescuers there was an awful crash. For a moment the flames

were smothered; then up again with renewed fury they flashed forth.

Not until this final moment had Aleita moved since Reginald left her. She stood motionless —her feet rooted to the earth—her eyes fastened upon the hideous spectacle. But as the tower reeled on its foundations she threw her arms into the air and with a despairing cry uttered one word—"Reginald!"

Strange arms caught her as she fell. A strange roof sheltered her that night. No father's nor mother's smile greeted the child which came before morning. He—the father—was he lying under those smoking ruins? And the mother, mercifully unconscious of both loss and gain, of the life which was gone and the one which was come, felt no grief, and no rejoicing.

It was a cruel fatality which had taken Mazoombah away at this hour of supreme suffering and need.

The lines revealed by his glass were so confusing he knew not how to read them. Bright spirals were so intermingled with the sinister zig-zag markings, and all formed a group so strange,

he resolved to appeal to a higher source for an explanation; to go to the Brotherhood for advice—for help.

The distance to the plains of Thibet was great; but that mattered not. Before sunrise his eyes beheld the great desert. As he arrived at the supreme centre of the Brotherhood, there came to meet him a man with commanding presence, who wore his simple garb as if it were royal purple.

"You have been misled," said he with a wave of his hand. "Go back. Your place is there. You are needed."

A deep flush of mortification overspread Mazoombah's face. "Ah!" he said, bowing to his superior, "I knew I was not worthy to bear the name of Mahatma."

"Not so, my brother. The conditions are unusual. Any of us might have failed to read the signs. Go at once. A terrible thing has happened." And Mazoombah sped him back to his dutiful path and post near Aleita.

* * * * *

After that last moment at the fire, when Regi-

nald saw himself sinking into the fearful crater, he recollected that he had invoked the great powers, so recently acquired for humanity, to save his own self, and he seemed to awaken in a strange place. His first thought was of Aleita. But that was not she; that dark-haired woman lying there moaning in pain. Who was she? And why was she in such distress? Oh! Now he remembered her face. She was that young girl in the steamer whom that wretched boy who drowned himself, loved so madly. How she weeps! She suffers. He will try and help her. But he could not. He spoke to her, and she did not heed him. And then, he found he was drifting out into the darkness. And where was the spot where he left Aleita? It was near here. There was the fallen tree on which they sat. She is not here. She must be at home. Who is that lying so white and still on the bed? Can that be she? And what is that at her side? "O God! It is a child! Mine—hers." He stretched out his arms with a cry of joy. But he could not awaken them to his touch.

Aleita seemed not to hear him. Her eyes,

large, pathetic, deep sunken, with great black rings about them. God! How she must have suffered! but they are looking right at him, with an unseeing far-away expression. He called in agony, "Aleita—my beloved—it is I —your husband. I have come to take care of you, my own, my wife."

Still she never stirred nor answered, except to clasp her baby's hand more tightly, and sigh; such a patient, deep, heart-breaking sigh.

What did it mean? Mazoombah entered. He turned eagerly to him; but the doctor walked directly toward the spot where he stood, seeming to pass through him as if he were not there. What strange trick was his imagination playing upon him? He walked to the mirror, and looking into it he saw—nothing. There was no image, no reflection. A light began to dawn upon his mind. A brightly burning lamp stood upon the table. He placed himself directly in front of it. The light was not obstructed; he cast no shadow.

"Yes," he said, "as I thought—I am dead. Not dead—but, I am benumbed—paralyzed. I

thought physical death was fuller, more real than life. This is awful—something stronger than myself is drawing me away. I cannot stay with my wife and child!"

He was again in the darkness—alone—among those charred ruins of the convent, which seemed to fill him with shuddering horror.

CHAPTER XIX.

WITHOUT purpose, or hope, he waited. A formless mist was taking on definite shape, and a majestic being stood before him. It was Alta.

"O Sire, speak to me—speak to me!" Reginald cried. "Break this intolerable silence. I seem alone in creation. It is not life, nor yet is it death."

"You are right, my son," said Alta. "It is neither life nor death. All unprepared, you are like fruit plucked unripe."

"My punishment is greater than I can bear," groaned the wretched man.

"It is not punishment in the sense you intend," said Alta, kindly. "In a swift impulse of self-preservation you resorted to desperate means, and you must bear the consequence of violated law."

"Father," said he, humbly, "it was not for myself. I thought of Aleita; of the child which was coming; of their need of me; and as the walls fell I remembered that I might save myself. It was all swift as the lightning-flash. Why was it wrong? Mazoombah did it when he came to us on the steamer."

"Ah! my son; there is a vast difference between a temporary suspension of the atoms of your material body, and their actual dispersion in space, as by a great shock, an explosion where the particles are rent asunder. But do not despair, my son—be hopeful. Rise up in your godgiven right, might and majesty, and command the reassembling of those elements composing your body and they in time will obey the command."

"Miserable being that I am!" cried Reginald.

"Far from it," said Alta. "Your soul was guiltless of evil intent. The trouble is that men do not realize the responsibility there is in living or unseasonably dying.

"You remember in the vision you saw that your organism was merely the sum of countless

other organisms, as real as yourself. You saw that their activities were your life; while your will was the directing impulse of their universe. You saw that a wound from a thorn was a wide-spread catastrophe; as mysterious and fatal to them as the submergence of Atlantis to you. So, you may imagine what it was when you set these millions of dismembered atoms adrift into space! It was your kingdom; they were your subjects. Every one of them had a claim upon your care and protection.

"A miserable—an unworthy king," answered Reginald. "What can I do, Sire, to repair this great calamity?"

"Despair not, my son. These micro-organisms are quickly obedient to the mastery of mind and soul. You possess both these in unusual potency. They will feel its impelling attraction. Already the currents are beginning to move toward you in obedience to the will power, and will soon remedy the harm done."

"And may I not be near her? With her and my child?"

"Yes, so long as there are answering sympa-

thetic vibrations you will be with them and help them, and they will help you.

"Your hope is in courage, in effort unceasing. The stronger your soul, the sooner will you compel the life currents to come into harmonious relations, and you may be assured the best will come to pass at the earliest moment. You must learn to work and wait on nature's laws."

CHAPTER XX.

Six years had elapsed since the passing away of Reginald Irving. His People's Palace in Whitechapel had become the centre of a vast, ever-expanding work; and its presiding genius was the widow of the founder. It would be difficult in that calm, beautiful woman to recognize the child-wife Reginald brought across the sea from Washington. How beautiful she was in the severe simplicity of her soft subdued draperies! And were such mingled sadness and sweetness ever seen before? Was it strange, that she was worshiped as a sort of a divinity, and that peace, happiness and healing seemed to come with the magic of her touch? Her boy with the golden curls, and inscrutable eyes, was he not also lovely as an angel? Doctor Mazoombah had been the faithful friend and

helper of Aleita during these long years of working and waiting, and now stood by watching the struggle going on in her mind, the temptation to go home. Laying his hands, gently on the heads of mother and son he said, "Yes, the time has come you must go." Long had Aleita resisted her mother's entreaties to come home for a visit. But now on this bright May morning, there was a new look in her face as she took her boy in her lap and said, "Darling, mamma is going on a long journey."

"Me, too?" inquired the boy. "Me going too?"

"Yes, dear, you too. We are going to America to see grandma and grandpa."

"And my papa?" asked the boy. "I want to see him too."

Tears welled up in the mother's eyes, so full of soft light.

"You know papa is in Heaven, my darling. Some day we will see him. Not yet. Can you remember the word I taught you, my son?"

"Yes, mamma—Sacrifice," answered he, proudly.

"Yes, darling—Sacrifice. It is the most beautiful thing in the world. When Christ came on earth to teach mankind how to live, that was sacrifice. All your life, darling, remember that your papa sacrificed himself for others."

Little Reginald was laboriously climbing up on a chair and on tip-toe trying to reach his father's picture. "I want to look at it good," said he, "so that when I see papa in Heaven I will know him the very moment I see him."

* * * * *

The broad avenues of Washington City were unchanged. The beautiful parks were only more beautiful, with superb fresh verdure. The dome of the Capitol, shining against the blue sky like a structure in dreamland, seemed to blossom and expand into new architectural effects. Was there not after all, mingled with the heart-breaking sadness, a thrill of gladness in this home-coming?

Aleita almost felt Reginald's hand in hers as with fast beating heart she gazed upon the familiar and beloved city of her childhood. And when at night she lay upon the very same bed

where she had dreamed all her first girlish dreams, there was mingled with the retrospection a sense of his actual presence, such as she had never had since that tragic night in India. And why was one strange mysterious sounding word whispered in her ear over and over again? She did not recollect having heard it before, except in a dream. Why had it such fascination for her now?

In the morning she laid aside her dark London dress and put on instead, a gown of soft white clinging stuff. Little Reginald coming into the room, was speechless with wonder; then cried, clapping his hands:

"What a beautiful mamma! What a beautiful mamma I have!"

Aleita laughed as she caught him joyously in her arms.

"If papa could only see you now," said the boy, joyously.

Kissing him, as the tears ran down her cheeks, she said: "Perhaps he does, darling. That is the reason I put on this pretty dress. I thought papa would like it as of old."

The boy in excitement ran quickly into the hall, calling:

"Grandma, come quick, and see how beautiful my mamma is to-day. Won't papa be surprised!"

When, after breakfast, Aleita said she was going to walk with her boy, her mother and father at once divined her purpose and did not offer to go with her.

Just as they supposed, her steps turned toward the grove. As she entered the leafy solitude her heart beat fast—she felt almost suffocated as they drew near the large oak and the magic spot under its great branches.

"Oh, what a beautiful place!" cried the child. "Mamma—why do you cry?"

She had covered her face with her hands, with such a rush of mingled grief and triumph—when in wild excitement the child screamed, "Mamma, is this Heaven? There's papa! There's papa!"

Her heart seemed to have stopped beating. Her hands dropped lifeless at her side as she stood under the great oak tree. She looked up

and saw—Reginald. In another instant strong loving arms enfolded her, a wildly beating heart was next to her own. It was he—in very truth and life—her husband.

God forbid that words of ours should reveal the sacred confidences of that hour. How he had watched over and been near her, ever helping and being helped.

She would not be able to bear it now; but in time all would be told her. That sacred grove had witnessed strange scenes in their life-drama. But could anyone have pictured such rapture as this!

The perfect wild rose was blooming, as did that other years before, on the topmost branch of that pyramid of vines. With a rush of memories which could never be uttered, Reginald reached up and plucked it; then placed it in the bosom of his wife's gown, exclaiming, "In such fragrance was our love begun, and so hath it culminated in our present and eternal joy."

"Papa," said the little Reginald, "isn't mamma beautiful?"

"As an angel," said the father, taking the boy in his arms, kissing him passionately again and again.

"Papa, papa, I told mamma you'd be surprised to see her so beautiful, like an angel."

A glorious halo surrounded them, and out of it soon Alta came forward in great majesty, saying, "Blessed be thee, O my children all." And in an instant was gone again. Mazoombah stood apart a silent and unobserved witness of this joyful reunion. But now he came forward with open arms and congratulations.

Little Reginald, this beautiful child of love and harmony, has grown to man's estate, a high type of the race of men. Wise beyond his years, the pride and pleasure of all who know him. Reginald Irving was ever contented after such an experience as befell him at the fire in India, to keep his feet on mother earth and in close touch with humanity, feeling sure that in so doing he was fulfilling the highest law of his being. Alta and Doctor Mazoombah are frequent and welcome visitors to the Irving home. Each coming and going in his own way and accord-

ing to his individual will and pleasure. Alta makes his advent like the approach of dawn in the east and grandly grows into the full orbed day. Mazoombah comes as the rushing of mighty waters in great force and warmth.

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